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Maid turned farmer tops rice yield in Pangasinan

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Six suspected shabu dealers shot dead in Davao City

■ Entertainment
PDI interviews Barbra Streisand

Pinoy sculptor rues lack of wood for Paete carvers

By Nob Cantoveros

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

'Flip-flop' and the year's other most abused words

Sunday, January 2, 2005 • 24 pages / vol. 28 / no. 25

COUNTDOWN TO 2005
A party of about 15,000 packs the stretch of Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Avenue to make merry, to count their blessings and watch a 15-minute Makati fireworks show (at right) designed by foreign experts. A first-ever, the street party is going to be a yearly event in the hallowed tradition of the Times Square countdown in New York City.

2 more Pinays found dead

Bodies of entertainers trapped in hotel identified, says DFA

By TJ Burgonio

TWO FILIPINO women apparently trapped inside a hotel when gargantuan waves swamped beach resorts in Thailand have been confirmed dead, raising to five the number of Filipinos killed in the disaster, officials said yesterday.

Eighteen other Filipinos were believed still missing while 34 survived, according to an updated tally released by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The bodies of Kathryn Joy Lomadilla and Ria Jane M. Tutaan, who were believed to be part of an entertainment group working at Hotel Sofitel on Khao Lak Island, were identified by three entertainers, DFA undersecretary Zilliwen Amigos said in a phone interview.

"Two Filipinos told Consul Orlophonia Severin Velero that on Dec. 26 they recovered the remains of Tutaan and Lomadilla," Amigos said.

He said the pair "could have been trapped" when massive waves buffeted Sofitel at the height of tsunamis, which slammed into the coasts of nine countries in South Asia and Africa the day after Christmas.

Three of bodies lay strewn around the hotel after the waves subsided.

"It [would be] a miracle if one survived there," Amigos said.

At least 10 Filipinos, mostly musicians, are working in Khao Lak, officials said.

Three of those previously reported missing have been found alive. The DFA identified them as Marian Peang, Emily Salao and Joy William Decapio.

The three other Filipinos confirmed by the DFA to have been killed were Jacelin C. Sales, 37, a tailor at the Sofitel; Joy Catherine Tamerin Ortendela, 32, and Shaclene Mitz Ang Tan, 35.

Ortendela and Tan were on holiday with their families on Phuket island.

Ortendela, whose Japanese husband and three children are missing, was an alumna of the University of the Philippines. Tan was a biology sophomore at the Ateneo de Manila University.

Sales' son, Ivannel, was to fly to Bangkok to claim the body of his mother, Amigos said.

Three more names have been added to the list of missing persons. They were Anna Liza Villanueva, Joy Ocampo and Michelle Beatrice Noel.

CONTINUED A10

FOREIGN CASUALTIES BY NATIONALITY

Sweden	80
Germany	34
British	34
France	27
Norway	21
Japan	11
Italy	11
United States	11
Switzerland	10
Australia	11
Denmark	7
Singapore	1
Belgium	6
Netherlands	5
Austria	5
Canada	5
Finland	4
South Korea	4
South Africa	4
Brazil	3
Taiwan	2
Philippines	2
Poland	1
Russia	1
Colombia	1
New Zealand	1
Czech Republic	1
Turkey	1
Mexico	1
China	1

DEATH TOLL BY COUNTRY

Indonesia	80,240
Sri Lanka	28,729
India	9,842
Thailand	4,812
Somalia	300
Myanmar	90
Maldives	82
Malaysia	68
Tanzania	10
Bangladesh	2
Kenya	1

Elephants join relief drive to speed up delivery of aid

WARSHIPS, aircraft, trucks and even elephants were used to speed relief and rehabilitation efforts yesterday as Asian rock star and singer Jose Mari Chan and other celebrities joined the United Nations in launching a campaign to mobilize international support for victims of the tsunami disaster.

After a week of bickering among governments over how to speed up the operation and who should lead it, US Secretary of State Colin Powell met with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to marshal new the global effort.

In the disaster-declared New Year celebrations around the world and the death toll neared 150,000, the United Nations warned that starvation and disease were pushing huge numbers of refugees to tsunami-devastated Aceh in Indonesia closer to death "every minute."

Aid commitments totalled about $3 Bn billion after Japan pledged $500 million and US President George W. Bush, under pressure over the pace and scale of American aid to Asian tsunami victims, raised the US contribution to $350 million, 10 times the amount pledged two days ago.

Aid workers said supplies were beginning to reach survivors.

The Indonesian government said the death toll in Aceh from last week's earthquake and giant waves was likely to rise above 100,000. The confirmed figure stood at some 80,000 dead.

"You name the reception of Indonesia in 1000 have we been hit so hard by the devastating wrath of nature," President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said in a New Year's Eve speech, referring to a volcanic eruption and tsunami that killed 90,000.

"We mourn, we cry, and our hearts weep witnessing thousands of those killed left raped in the streets. We witness those who survive almost losing hope and sleep in sadness and confusion."

Elephants, Thailand's tourist war veterans, were being brought in to help victims, reports said.

CONTINUED A10

SO MUCH, SO MANY TO PRAY FOR. Pope John Paul II says his celebrates New Year's midnight Mass in his private chapel for the special intentions of the victims of the tsunamis in countries in South Asia. (Story on Page A4.)

Tips to donors: No gowns, used underwear, please; think of victims' dignity

By Veli Contreras

NEXT time you want to play Good Samaritan to victims of disasters, take every care not to make them victims again.

If you're donating clothes, don't include inappropriate clothing such as gowns or "see-through" outfits. Make sure the garments you are giving away are not "overused" and are still fit for wearing.

And please, no second-hand underwear.

These may sound amusing, but they are the "basics" that the humanitarian group Tulong Mindanawon considers important enough to share with other disaster management teams following its recent experience with relief work in the storm-ravaged areas of Luzon.

Tulong executive coordinator Nikki Mendoza said she was shocked to find that the clothes that well-meaning citizens had donated included items "just coming out of the closet after a long period of no use or even of outcast."

Mendoza acknowledged that Filipinos are generous providers of hand-me-downs for disaster victims.

"The volume is usually tremendous, but it will be helpful if the donor individual or organization were to take charge of quality control," she said.

Provided effects like underwear, for example, "should always be brand new, and please, no gowns or see-through fashion attire, which undoubtedly cannot protect from the cold and rain," she added.

"Donate only clothes and personal items that you yourself will find decent to use," she said.

Mendoza stressed these points in an instructional booklet she intends to send

CONTINUED A10

A3
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

DepEd to tap students in school rehab

By Dona Z. Pazolagan

THE DEPARTMENT of Education would tap students and teachers in public schools nationwide in a major fund drive to rebuild 1,248 public schools heavily damaged by last year's killer typhoons.

Education Secretary Florencio Abad said the students and teachers would not be required to shell out money, but would be asked to do something that may be just as important.

"Modest things like writing letters of encouragement to their fellow students and teachers are part of the psycho-social rehabilitation process that sometimes time is not given more importance," said Abad.

The DepEd hopes to raise nearly half a billion pesos to rehabilitate the damaged schools.

Completely destroyed

Around 220 schools were reportedly completely destroyed by the recent typhoons which also killed thousands of people.

Aside from rebuilding classrooms and entire schools, Abad said that hundreds of thousands of desks, chairs, textbooks and other school facilities have also to be replaced.

The DepEd has put the damage at P483 million. It hopes to undertake the actual school reconstruction from January to March.

Damage to schools completely destroyed amounted to P20 million, while seriously damaged schools reached P172 million.

The Bicol region sustained the most damage, with 624 schools affected worth about P146 million.

In Cagayan Valley, 266 schools were damaged worth P64 million, in Central Luzon, 201 schools were damaged worth P65 million.

Not enough funds

Abad said the government does not have enough funds to rebuild these schools.

"The extensive damage in the schools caused by the typhoons can not be covered by the government allocations. We have to devise our own methods by launching 'Bayai Kabataan,'" he said.

NEW YEAR REVELRY TOLL

2 dead, 585 injured

By Alexis Papa, Jerome Aning, Luige del Puerto and Leila Salaverria

THE NEW Year celebration yesterday was generally peaceful, resulting in fewer number of casualties from firecrackers, authorities said.

Two people were killed, police said, adding this was much lower than the 21 deaths reported in 2003.

The Department of Health recorded 585 injuries, which is about one percent lower than the figure of 590 casualties reported in 2003. The Philippine National Police, however, reported only 243 injuries.

A total of 33 injuries were caused by stray bullets. In 2003, only 31 injuries were due to stray bullets.

One of the two fatalities died from a stray bullet, police said.

The victim, whose police identified as Mary Jane Acuña, 31, was watching TV in one room of the two-story house in Tondo at around 12:30 a.m. yesterday when a stray bullet fell through the roof and hit her on the forehead.

She was rushed to a hospital by her parents but was declared dead at 7:30 a.m. yesterday.

Freak incident

Police said the other fatality died from what they described as a freak accident.

Senior Supt. Raul Medina of the Pasig City police said the victim, Ronel Pogoy Quiapo, 27, of Magsaysay, Barangay Bambolanan, was impaled by a falling "banig" stuck on the left temple.

"This is the first time I have heard of an accident like this," Medina said, adding they have not yet ruled where the "banig" had come from.

Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil established the decision to cancel-out to an unrivalled campaign for safety in handling firecrackers.

"Our alert level has been high and we have strong tie-ups with the local governments and other agencies like the DOH and media in enforcing firecracker zones. So our efforts have paid off and saved more of the public as high," Bataoil said.

He admitted that they have yet to reconcile their figures with that of the DOH, which had reportedly "tallied more than 600 injuries. But even so, Bataoil said the figures are still lower than last year.

Bataoil also said the land mines could have contributed to the low casualties.

He said police have not received reports of unlaunched mine being visible in metro.

PNP chief Director General Edgar Aglipay had warned policemen that they will be dismissed from the service and criminal charges if they fire their guns during the New Year celebrations.

The streets of Intramuros were forsaken were covered with smoking tape before New Year's Eve to ensure none would be firing their guns indiscriminately during the revelry.

Police units under the Eastern Police District reported less firecracker injuries this year compared to last year.

EPD Chief Supt. Oscar Valiente said roughly 10 blocks have violated incidents in the district were reported as of 2:14 in morning.

Of the number, 21 persons were briefly confined in hospitals. The rest suffered minor burns or wounds, and were promptly sent home.

In Quezon City and Caloocan areas, police reported 194 injuries due to firecrackers. The other people were injured due to stray bullets.

Most of the firecracker victims either lost their fingers or sustained their hands, police said.

The North Area Police District reported a major reduction in the number of firecracker injuries this year.

Chief Supt. Hor Wong, MPD district director, said there were reported 16 firecracker injuries, two in Malabon, 27 in Navotas and 14 in Valenzuela City.

Wong expressed satisfaction over the current figures which he said represented a major decline in casualties. Injured compared to those of last year in the mid.

Zero casualty

Meanwhile, Batasan did not report any injury coming from the vicinity.

In a report yesterday sent to the Southern Police District Director, Batasan Chief Supt. Wilfredo Enrile said the issue had zero incident rate.

A check with the Tapang Hospital District hospital showed eight patients treated for minor burns. With a report by Nancy C. Carvajal

CLAUDIA Magana, 8, of Baseo, Quezon City, cries in pain while being treated Saturday for second degree burns which he sustained when he lighted the firecracker he was holding but it exploded three seconds after midnight. EDWIN BACASMAS

Chavit: I have forgiven Erap

By Leila Salaverria

WITH the court of the New Year comes new resolutions.

For Boots that governor Luis "Chavit" Singson, one of his resolutions is to forgive his enemies.

On New Year's Eve, Singson said that he has forgiven former President Joseph Estrada and vows to attend the inaugural campaign for safety in handling firecrackers.

"Our alert level has been high and we have strong tie-ups with the local governments and other agencies like the DOH and media in enforcing firecracker zones. So our efforts have paid off and saved more of the public as high," Bataoil said.

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PNP chief Director General Edgar Aglipay had warned policemen that they will be dismissed from the service and criminal charges if they fire their guns during the New Year celebrations.

The streets of Intramuros were forsaken were covered with smoking

Baby boy born one minute into 2005

By Fe Zamora

BOAO on the first minute of 2005, Lowell de los Reyes made a dramatic entrance that left his father Benedicto and Imelda elated.

Rescuers lit up the skies as Lowell's mother, Mary Grace de los Reyes, made the final push to deliver her first born, a bouncing 2.7 kg baby boy at exactly 12:01 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2005, at the Quirino Memorial Hospital in Cubao, Quezon City.

Midwife Sharon Salas said the "crowd"—or the top of the baby's head—actually appeared at the stroke of midnight. But Lowell was "completely out" only at 12:01 a.m., while resting from soldiers electrician Dr. Cristina Mendoza and baby.

Cute

The baby, who was 49 cm long at birth, has black hair, a cute and dimpled chin was and his skin.

"He's got his mother's chin," gushed the baby's father. Mark Reyes, a second-generation Irish American Filipino, who could not hide his pride as he showed off his son.

"I want him to become a fine football player," said the 5'10" Reyes, a basketball enthusiast.

He said he planned his son after the New York Knicks basketball player Latrell Sprewell.

"Does he have long fingers? And large hands?" were the first questions that Mom thought to ask the nurses upon being told that Mary Grace had delivered a boy.

A college graduate who works part-time at the Ali Mall department store in Cubao, Reyes, 22, said he has yet to meet the parents of Mary Grace and ask for their daughter's hand. Mary Grace's family resides in Isabela province.

Overwhelmed

Mary Grace, 23, lives with relatives in Loyola Heights and was a student at the Manuel L. Quezon University (MLQU) when she became pregnant.

"I will marry her, but I have to

LATRELL: A dramatic entrance into the New Year.

permanent job yet. I don't even know how I'm going to pay the hospital bills," said Gino's unemployed father who is a black American soldier from Las Vegas.

But the overwhelmed young father already has plans to raise funds. He said he would sell his Pentium 2 computer "for P5,000" for the hospital bills.

He has also inquired from the nurses about how he can pay him-by-month obtain some assistance from the social welfare department.

High spirits

Despite the discouraging financial prospects, Reyes was in high spirits. He relaxed how he had received an envelope containing P5,000 worth of gift checks from the McDonald's fast-food chain which had a sponsorship agreement with the hospital for the first 10 babies to be born in 2005.

"I thought it was money but this is fine," said the laughing Reyes.

JVC (PHILIPPINES), INC.
IS MOVING HERE
STARTING JANUARY 10, 2005
OUR NEW ADDRESS IS:
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(formerly Pasay Road) MAKATI CITY
OUR NEW TEL. NOS. ARE:
8897711-22
NEW WORLD RENAISSANCE HOTEL
OUR NEW OFFICE
SAN LORENZO VILLAGE
ARNAIZ AVE.
MAKATI AVE.
ANSONS EMPORIUM
TO EDSA
JVC
ATTENTION : To all JVC Makati Service Center Customers
On January 6 & 7, 2005, we will accept "for repair units " only. We will be closed on January 8, 2005
Normal full service operation shall resume on January 10, 2005 at our new office.

METRO
Editor Ester G. Cipriano Assistant Editor Corazon B. Silva

Police academy for WPD

From tragedy springs hope

Man of God tries to see through death, destruction

By Leila B. Salaverria

PRACTICE makes perfect.

Even if they are given the moniker "Mindo's Finest," members of the Western Police District would still be given the chance to hone their skills with the backing-because-none of the Mindoro Police Academy.

The academy is the pet project of WPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong, who said he expected it to be inaugurated during the district's 104th anniversary on Dec. 9.

He said the academy would provide in-service training to cadets and veteran policemen so that the WPD would offer better services to the people.

"We want our policemen to be well-armed and prepared to handle the very complicated job of enforcing the law and maintaining order," Bulaong told the Inquirer. "We want to do justice to the name 'Mindo's Finest.'"

Like the real thing

He added that those of participating in in actual antiterror operations. His academy would provide training classes to handling incidents like hostage taking, bank robberies, gun battles and explosives control.

Bulaong said the academy would simulate those situations so that the policemen would know what to do should they arise. He added that the training would also emphasize strongly the safety of civilians who would be involved in a live incident.

Sometimes, he added, policemen have not participated in an operation for a long time so they forget what they learned in school.

"There is no substitute for training," Bulaong said. "It would help policemen to react a second or a minute."

Less deaths

The WPD chief also said that the additional training the academy would provide could ensure that there would be less policemen injured or killed in the line of duty.

"We want them to be careful and competent to avoid unnecessary deaths," he said.

Several Manila policemen died in the line of duty in 2004, most of them losing their lives fighting off armed robbers.

Bulaong hailed the dead policemen as heroes, saying they did all that they could to thwart criminals.

"They are real heroes. They prove that they put service above all by offering the supreme sacrifice," he said.

A FOURTEEN-of-light (above) a message of hope as residents of Mabolo Village in Quezon City witness 2004. At left, a garland moves as the 10 Family ETF at Jupiter Place building in Makati City prepares for a reclam run (the run also is an enquiry for More Than.

(PHOTOS BY MARIANNE BERMUDEZ)

By Lolgo A. del Puerto

GOD IS with His people amid tragedies, expressing a message giving hope.

This was the core of the New Year's day homily of Fr. Alex Baltazar, who spoke of the massive death and destruction that hit the country, South Asia and the rest of the world in 2004 driven to a close.

"How can this be a happy New Year when so many people have died in the country and in the rest of the world?" Baltazar said before the congregation gathered at the Our Lady of the Abandoned Church in Mindanao City.

Despite in the church responded with distress in agreement with the statements of Baltazar.

Simple celebration

A parishioner told the Inquirer that her family was keeping their New Year celebration simple.

"The tragedy seemed large at the back of our minds. It tempered our celebration... and Fr. Baltazar's homily reinforced it," said Ruby Macabasa, a television employee.

The family's media team consisted of corruption soup and pancit. When the clock struck 12, Ruby, his wife Sharon and 7-year-old son Chico stepped out of their house in the middle-class 300 Subdivision in Marikina and lighted a "mini-Judas bolt" and a few firecrackers on the street.

"If it's just us, we can do without the firecrackers. But it would be difficult to explain that to a kid," he said. "But we children who chose fireworks which are not powerful. They were nothing compared to last year," Ruby said.

Fr. Baltazar told the Inquirer that he chose to talk about the killer tsunamis that devastated parts of Asia and Africa to remind people to temper their celebrations.

He said it would not be right for Filipinos to be filled with laughter at this time.

"This is a call for us to unite in mourning. At least 225,000 are dead. There could be more. How can we celebrate the New Year amid this event?" he said.

Instead of lavish meals and the loud cracks of pyrotechnics, Baltazar urged families to pray and mourn with the rest of Asia.

Faith kept intact

He added that the tragedy should not take away our faith in God.

"One of the things that I asked from God this year is the wisdom to understand this tragedy," he said.

"In the face of this tragedy, God has a message. What exactly? We don't know yet," he said.

Baltazar said: "Jesus is now in Sri Lanka, in Indonesia, in Thailand, and in the south African nations hit by giant waves. He mourns with us."

But he added that even in mourning, joy can be found.

"Because of the tragedy, the world is united," he said.

Baltazar said he hoped the tragedies that struck here and abroad would give people the humility to realize that they need God in their lives. He also hoped such events would give men the strength to move on.

"We should not lose our love in despair. There is hope amid all these," he said.

Three hurt in Cubao bomb blast

By Yvonne Santos

MID-brightened siren and right security, unidentified persons managed to trigger a bomb at the busy Cubao commercial district in Quezon City on New Year's Eve.

A report by Central Police District investigators said the bomb was placed by a computer flower box in front of the Philtrust Bank at Quezon Building, 826 Edsa, around 11:00. Bomb threats.

The blast was put across Bruner's Plaza, a popular shopping center, and along a busy sidewalk leading to Aurora Boulevard.

Because of the location of the bomb, it was fortunate that only three persons were hurt, authorities said.

Police reported that the explosion occurred at 7:23 p.m. and created a 15-meter wide and four-inch hole on the Bruner bus.

Abee Dizon, 35, of Barangay Bilibid, Quezon City; Ivy Lachica, 26, of Sta. Mesa Heights; and Lorenzo Reyes Jr., 21, driver, of Mandaluyong, Rizal, were passing by when the bomb went off.

Reyes sustained second-degree burns, while Dizon and Lachica only suffered minor injuries, according to police. They were treated at the East Avenue Medical Center.

The explosion also shattered the glass doors and windows of the bank and those of an adjacent travel agency office.

CPD director senior Supt. Silvestre Bietsero said "It was an emotional but we're still determining the motive and the people responsible."

Initial investigation showed that TNT, a common ingredient of dynamites, was used in the bomb.

"The Explosives and Ordnance Division is still looking for fragmental evidence to further aid and backtrack," Bietsero said.

The bombing took place even as the police in Metro Manila was put on "full alert" beginning Thursday the fourth anniversary of the December 2000 Rizal Day bombing, which killed 22 people and injured more than 100.

A week earlier, on Christmas Eve, police in Manila defused another bomb planted inside a passenger bus.

The bomb in Manila was also built with TNT.

Police explosives experts said the bomb was similar to those built by alleged al Qaeda member Ramzi Yousef and those made by the Abu Sayyaf.

NBI made good in 2004, solving more crimes than in 2003

By Leila B. Salaverria

DOING by the number of cases it solved last year, the National Bureau of Investigation did good in 2004.

The NBI has reported a 3.3 per-cent increase in the number of cases it successfully last year. The bureau closed 10,136 cases, up from 9,877 in 2003.

Of those cases, several were high-profile crimes involving kidnapping for ransom and murder.

One of them is the rescue of businessman Ernesto Chua in Cebu City and the arrest of the gang behind the kidnapping.

The suspects were said to be members of the notorious Wan-Wan kidnap and robbery group.

Also, three suspects in the kidnapping and murder of Chinese-Filipino businessman Bong Chua Jr. surrendered to the bureau and evidence their participation in the incident.

A Wan-Wan gang leader, Carlos Laguio, was also arrested.

The bureau also scored with high-profile cases like that of Eric Alba, the alleged killer of publicist Elsa Formoso.

Also arrested this year was in-ron Ebio, who was stabbed while attempting to flee the country for Malaysia via Zamboanga City. Ebio is a suspect in the famous singer Freddie aguilar, was the driver of the van that hit and killed pres-dential adviser Nestor Perez.

Two boys stabbed to death; father is suspect

By Lolgo A. del Puerto

IT WAS the Student New Year's day for Dr Leon family of Pasig City.

At dawn yesterday, Amor decided discovered the body of her grandnephew John Michael Sanchez, 6, stuffed inside a refrigerator.

Brother, too

She also found the body of John Michael's younger brother, Joshua, 3, on the second floor of their home in Calzada Street, Bonifacio Compound, Barangay Pinagbuhatan.

The youngster has suffered stab wounds to the chest and abdomen. He failed to make it alive to the hospital. John Michael also died of stab wounds in the chest, the police said.

Yesterday, Amor was still too affected to talk. She kept mostly to herself. Amor's family lives a few blocks away from the children's home.

The police said Amor checked on the children and their father, Jaime de Leon Pil, 27, at about 3 a.m.

Alfredo de Leon, Amor's brother, said he had no idea of the tragedy that had struck the victims. He came to visit them yesterday morning.

"I just learned of what happened when I came here," he said. "I came to celebrate the New Year, and that is what I walked into."

Pil was nowhere to be found.

He is the primary suspect in the death of his two children, according to Sr. Supt. Raul Medina, city police chief.

"We consider him the primary suspect. He had custody of the children at the time of their death/s, and he is running now," Medina said.

The scene of the twin killings shocked the community at Bernardo Compound.

Neighbor's skepticism

"I he (Pil) indeed did it... I never heard him hurt his children," a neighbor said, shaking his head.

From interviews with neighbors, a sketchy profile of Pil has emerged.

He married to be unfaithful. He mostly stayed at home with his three children, the youngest of whom was eight.

It was not immediately clear whether the girl was with her brothers or with her grandparents at the time of the killings.

Pil interrogated little-ruth angels here, but was known to his children, according Pedro Bola.

Another neighbor said that a few hours before the New Year, several people drinking on the street greeted Pil a "Happy New Year."

"People called out to him to greet him, he did not respond. It was about 9 p.m.," the neighbor said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Quoting family members, Medina said Pil was hoping he would be reunited with his estranged wife on New Year's Day.

"She apparently did not arrive that night," Medina said.

Housing office gets go-ahead for repairs

OPERATIONS are supposed to return to normal at the Pag-ibig Fund office on the National Housing Corporation (NHC) building on Edsa after New Year, chief Nicholas Cancio ordered it reopened immediately.

Mr. Cancio went to the NHABC building on Sauyo on Street the other day to personally inspect the extent of damage caused by the fire.

He then told SOCIETY president Cyrus delos Angeles to have crack repaired as soon as possible.

Mr. Cancio to also duty of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council.

The Vice President assured clients of HDMFC that the collection service of their housing loan will not be affected by the recent fire that damaged the agency's one-stop collection center.

He tasked Delos Angeles to immediately relocate the collection groups to other areas of the building.

Delos Angeles reported to the Vice President that authorities were still determining the real cause of the blaze that affected the ground floor of the HDMFC building.

However, Angeles assured Mr. Cancio that pertinent documents of the agency are intact and secure.

Gov't won't give up fight for Journal group, says PCGG

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE GOVERNMENT is not giving up its fight to regain control of Philippine Journalists Inc. despite allegations of "unconscionable" Final irregularities leveled against its previous management led by Maximiliano Aquino, PCGG officials said on Sunday.

"They're still in for a long fight. We will not give [it] up," Presidential Commission on Good Government special counsel and former assistant Solicitor General Ricardo del Rosario said.

The PCGG has asked the Supreme Court to recall its Dec. 14 resolution ordering PJI's return to its former stockholders led by Emanuel Olivares after 16 years of being sequestered. The high court, however, required the Olivares group to pay the P63.86-million balance of a dollar-denominated loan owed the government.

The PCGG, which sequestered PJI in 1986 on suspicion it belonged to crooni cronies Presidential Marcos' brother-in-law Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez, insisted that PJI's outstanding obligations as of March 2003 stood at P63.86-million.

According to the PCGG, only the Romualdez and Aquigna camp owns the public debts above P50 million.

Following the SC's ruling, the Sandiganbayan 10th Division issued a stock writ of execution on Dec. 21 upon receipt of the P63.66-million payment and immediately turned over management and control of PJI to the Olivares group.

The writ itself went to handling the Olivares' case against Romualdez for his alleged ill-gotten wealth, which included PJI.

On Dec. 22, Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo asked the Sandiganbayan's stability the writ of execution, saying it was premature since there has been no entry of judgment yet in the SC.

But a representative of the Olivares group insisted it was too late in the day for the PCGG and the OSG to act.

"They can do what they want to do but the Supreme Court's order has been implemented. That order is already final," saying PJI general manager Augusto B. Villanueva said in a phone interview.

Villanueva said they will have to report all the company's assets, bank accounts and financial records since the former Olivares-appointed PJI officers had removed or encrypted with them in the turnover of vital company documents.

Lawyers and auditors of PJI's have installed barbed wire fences also reportedly threatened fired reportedly allegedly connected by the former PJI board of directors, led by Cajuco and Bobby de la Cruz, former PJI president and CEO, shortly after they took control of the publishing group on Dec. 15, 2004.

Villanueva accused the former Olivares-appointed PJI officials of mismanaging the company's finances.

He pointed out that PJI employees did not receive their 13th month pay and other benefits due them in December.

"The PCGG should know that the people they appointed have an ill [result]. The company is suffering from their officials," Villanueva said.

He said the former PJI officials fled when Sandiganbayan chemist Edgardo Olivares turned the writ of execution on Dec. 21.

PCGG news lawyers have sent a letter to De la Cruz, Cajuco, lawyer Baby Nak Bruno, the former PJI corporate secretary and chief legal officer and Celestino M. Arellano, former treasurer and chief finance officer, saying, "We have received reliable information that you have withdrawn and (are) withdrawing large sums of money from your bank(s) (where PJI funds are deposited, and will be disbursing the same to degrive Mrs. Rose to Olivares and the other stockholders of the assets of PJI prior to the takeover of the management and control of the said company by the said stockholders..."

INTERIOR: Secretary Angelo Reyes (foreground), PNP Director General Edjar Agbayo (behind him), PDEA Director General Anselmo Avenido (with mask) and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte examine the shabu found in a Davao drug lab that was raided by authorities on Friday. RAUL PALMA (LEFT) AND ARNOLD ALMACEN

6 suspected drug dealers killed in Davao City raid

By Alcuin Papa

SIX SUSPECTED drug dealers were killed in a gun battle with police who raided their shabu laboratory in Davao City Friday morning.

The raid led to the confiscation of 70 kilos worth P 112-million of processed shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) ready for shipping to the country, said Philippine National Police (PNP) spokesperson Sr. Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil.

Bataoil said investigators had yet to identify the suspects, all males whom he described as "Chinese-looking."

He said nine members of the raiding team, whom he did not identify, were hit by bullets in the areas but were protected by their bullet proof vests.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes and PNP Director General Edjar Agbayo flew to Davao City to inspect the shabu lab yesterday morning.

Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, whose no-nonsense approach toward crime in his city is well known, was reportedly irked by the discovery of the warehouse after local police officials had earlier denied the existence of drug labs in Davao.

Bataoil said the raid was carried out on the new warehouse on Shrine-Jose Rizal Highway in Sasa District by members of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force (AIDSOTF), the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) team based in Mindanao and local police.

Armed with a search warrant issued by a Davao City court, the raiding team stormed down on the building as a vehicle was escaping its gates but they were met with stiff resistance. A shoot-out ensued, leading to the death of all the suspects, Bataoil said.

"They (raiding team) were met with heavy resistance and this resulted to a full blown fire fight," the police official told the reporters in a telephone interview.

After the smoke cleared, the bloodied suspects were brought to the Davao Sanitarium Hospital where they were declared dead, Bataoil added.

Police also recovered laboratory equipment and chemicals, one .45 cal. pistols and a Pump gun rifle. The new warehouse was reportedly thought to be where a brand of syrup juice was being produced.

Capt. Milliam Villanueva, PDEA chief in Davao City, said the shabu laboratory was placed under surveillance months before Friday's raid.

The United States Drug Enforcement Agency, the Taiwan Ministry of Justice-Investigation Bureau and the Taiwanese police helped make the raid possible, Bataoil said, without going into detail.

He said follow-up operations were being conducted against the accomplices of the suspects.

On Wednesday, authorities raided three shabu laboratories in the provinces of Batangas and Bulacan, recovering a haul of shabu, chemicals and equipment worth close to P1.9 billion.

Agbayo said the Bureau of Customs would also be investigated for allowing the entry into the country of chemicals and equipment used to make shabu. With Anthony C. Alladin, PDI Mindanao Bureau

WELCOME RESPITE
After the area of memory comes the more ed space on the first day of the new year yesterday for this family of the six on the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City. JOAN BONDOC

DOJ: Pardon with parole for Jalosjos a possibility

By Philip C. Tubeza

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo could grant conditional child rapist Former Rep. Romeo Jalosjos a pardon for humanitarian reasons, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

Gonzalez said that although Jalosjos had yet to serve the minimum of his sentence, he could receive a "conditional pardon with parole restrictions" because of his wheelchair confinement.

"Based on the reports of his doctors, I think for humanitarian reasons he could be granted a conditional pardon with parole conditions," Gonzalez said.

"I suppose if he is really sick, he is entitled to that," he added.

Jalosjos was reportedly rushed recently to the Makati Medical Center from the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa City where he is serving two life terms for the rape of an 11-year-old girl seven years ago.

It was the second time he was rushed to the same hospital, the first being on Oct. 2, 2004, after he reportedly suffered a heart attack.

Gonzalez said he reviewed Jalosjos' case after he visited the former lawmaker in November at the NBP after his first confinement.

"When I last visited the NBP, I saw him and he was not fully well," Gonzalez said.

"His doctors told him he should have a heart bypass but he said he was afraid to undergo it," Gonzalez added.

Gonzalez said the Board of Medicine and Parole had told him Jalosjos was not eligible for parole because he had not yet served the minimum of his two life sentences.

"Strictly speaking, [he is] not yet eligible [but for humanitarian reasons, some kind of parole could be granted," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez said that should Jalosjos be pardoned the governor may not yet parole conditions like his having to report to the authorities every month; he must not commit any other crimes, and he cannot leave the hospital without approval from authorities.

"If he violates any of these conditions, I could have him re-arrested immediately," Gonzalez said.

Jalosjos' mother, Angelina, made an emotional appeal to the President on national radio on Wednesday, requesting nothing for a pardon for her son to allow him to seek proper medical treatment and enable them to be reunited in his latter years.

All signs point to peace, progress in Mindanao

By Saeed A. Dasi

(The author is the director general of the Center for the Promotion of Peace and Development in Mindanao. As the former MILF Ambassador for peace&unity and development and concurrent chair of the MILF economic development committee, he strongly recommended the conclusion of the peace talks and placing socio-economic development and other issues of the people in the major talking points of the GRP-MILF peace talks. Mindanao@yahoo.com)

THE WAR in Mindanao between the Philippine government (GRP) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has been going on for 35 years. It has caused the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, displaced and rendered homeless almost a million people, wrought havoc to the Philippine economy and stifled development.

But because of Mindanao's strategic location and vast economic potential, there are concerted efforts on the part of local and foreign stakeholders to help end the war. This war may come to an end following the forthcoming resumption of the GRP-MILF peace talks in Malaysia.

Winds of change

Both sides apparently have come to grips with the reality that guns and bullets will not make or unmake their respective objectives—the MILF's dream of a Bangsamoro Islamic State for some, and the GRP's desire to guarantee the integrity and flesh families into constitutional society, and economic set forward the objectives of transformation into a productive state the vast Mindanao resources in natural gas, oil, gold, nickel and other mineral deposits, as well as huge tracts of land suitable for agribusiness and agro-industrial projects and tourism.

These winds of change in resolve did not happen by happenstance, instead of violence—a preemptive strike (context and not necessarily potential),

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Editor Teddyboy S. Molavedra

WHAT'S INSIDE

Pacquiao still a puzzle

By Recah Trinidad

INSTEAD of heading straight to his California training camp, Manny Pacquiao leaves for Manila today reportedly to shoot a television commercial.

"I don't know what's going on," grunted Team Pacquiao member Mac Lazaro.

Pacquiao, 26, has remained a puzzle to people concerned over his next fight.

In turn, event Auto Manuel Elorcano, his next opponent, has said he did not believe Pacquiao was not yet training for their 8th 20-rounder.

PACQUIAO

Elorcano, who started serious preparations in November, suspected that Pacquiao's reported carefree schedule could ill be a ploy.

Elorcano, however, suggested the PFP boxing superstar must be a peak form to be Pacquiao's world count out coming to stumble for 12 furious rounds (when seen that).

The WBC/IBF bantamweight king indicated that he is already "working to correct a condition rules he will give me the capability to fight at full capacity for the whole 12 rounds (showing meaningful punches from the very start to finish)."

The two crossed in an interview with Elorcano conducted by Boxingscene's James Bloom, who traveled to Mexico City's Gilberto Romero Gym to personally get a first-hand account of the Mexican champ's training for the upcoming showdown with Pacquiao.

"This time I'm going to be heavy, stronger and more focused," Elorcano said. "At this moment, I'm on ground in gym work and physical strength exercises. I'm going to start sparring in the first days of January. I'm absolutely determined to knock

PACQUIAO A-12

Tips to donors: No gowns, used underwear, please; think of victims' dignity

Front page 1

out to other humanitarian organizations, including the government, in the hope that it would help to "improve" the way the countries responded to major calamities.

Mendoza was one of those who helped launch "Operation Sagip Buhay," a multi-sectoral initiative that also included the business community and the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts that disseminated some of the provisions in Cairo last month.

Since it launch, Operation Sagip Buhay has handed out relief goods worth P5.6 million to 13,874 families in Isabela, Quezon, Mendoza said.

Each family received at least two relief packs between Dec. 7 and 20, and distribution of these is continuing. About 2,240 families were also provided medical assistance.

Mendoza wants to share the "insights" from that operation, even as Filipinos welcome yet another example of nature's wrath in the recent tsunami onslaught in South Asia.

Apart from citing the importance of speed, coordination, transport, security and communication here for the success of massive relief operations, Mendoza also suggested how to put together a "standard relief package."

Standard food relief

"For a family of six, an acceptable standard food relief package for two days that would provide 2,100 calories per person per day should consist of the following: ½ kg of rice, 360 grams of protein—either canned pork, beef, tuna, sardines, beans or chicken; 180ml fish in the form alternately 360 equivalent and needs cooking—60 grams of iodized salt, 240 grams of brown sugar and 360 grams of cooking oil," she said.

Mendoza said this menu was based on the standards set by the United Nations World Food Programme and the High Commissioner for Refugees.

"Let us be aware that sufficient food and nutrition, and safe water remain to be the priority so these aid in building the resistance of the disaster victims to sickness and disease aggravated by exposure to harmful elements," she said.

Volunteers should also help to keep disaster survivors not just well-fed but, even more important, well-informed.

Mendoza said residents in calamity areas could benefit from a public address system and something as simple as a bulletin board assigned to key spots like hospitals, municipal halls, town plazas, churches, barangay centers and schools.

Information boards

The bulletin should focus, for example, the safe places to stay or to prevent people from "unnecessarily wandering such as specific directions and reposting donations to facilitate this," she said.

Information about the dead and missing should also be posted as these culminations fix each for the sake of the "anxious" survivors, she added.

Members also advised would-be donors here to keep the dignity of the victims uppermost in their minds.

Dignity

Victims of disasters have no choice but to depend on relief assistance. As such, those who respond to their plight should do so "with as much respect for the dignity of the human person," she said.

"Sending relief clothes is from the viewpoint of a victim may help. Let us hope and pray that we will not find ourselves on the other end of the receiving line someday," Mendoza said.

AWARD WINNING sculptor JB Cadenas at work on a buffet display

Pinoy sculptor rues lack of wood . . .

Front page A1

diminishing sources of wood.

Cadenas, who has come home to accept the Panasia-sp Filipino Award from Malacañang in an outstanding overseas Filipino, revealed how he has made millionaires out of some of his foreign opposition while the young craftsman of his native Pasig, Laguna, the country's wood-carving capital, are being forced to abandon the craft as raw materials become scarce or are too expensive.

GMA award

Cadenas, who himself wanted in the craft in Pasig's backyard shops as a young, has won more than 120 international contests and citations for his work.

The latest of these honors was bestowed on him by President Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang on Dec. 15. Cadenas, nicknamed JB, was a solitary dropout whose natural talent with the chisel first came to his defense at "first times and other supplies are a "TNT" (tapos ng tapos or finish after) in the United States.

JB is referred to in various circles as three ideal him as the "forever-carver" in the EU.

Bust of Rosie O' Donnell

He has his own studio in the Windy City where he works on the commissions he gets from corporate collectors, churches and hospitals, including US celebrities Rosie O'Donnell whose bust he is carving.

The man he taught after Cadenas, whose name could not be their families in local art circles because he has been based abroad since 1981, can execute the most intricate designs in his favorites being depictions of Philippine culture and folklore.

He picked up the skill in high school, sometimes skipping classes just to carve a quick buck. Charging one dozen entire spoons and forks for a Paris shop.

Odd jobs

He went on to various jobs that included doing coconut carvings in Manila bars and carving engine battery trademarks for gasoline buffalo on a battery-assist lines.

Filipinos can, however, see what could well be Cadenas' greatest mark—a relief sculpture in Luneta by the façade or boardwalk at the gate of the historic Fort Santiago in Intramuros, Manila. This was a restoration job that he and two other carvers were commissioned to do in 1989 by Imelda Marcos, for which he got paid P400 a day for five weeks.

The "I" is if replace—the original was destroyed in the bombing of Intramuros during World War II—is totally made up of eight wood panels featuring Philippine scenes.

JB says jokingly that if some calamity the were to befall the country and the Jones broke, the archipelago would see "two signatures" on the sides where the panels are joined.

Panasia Award

In an interview after he received the Panasia Award, the 44-year-old Cadenas said he would use his cash and attractive award to persuade officials the way have to obtain help to save his livelihood's once flourishing trade.

"There used to have about twenty shops in every other house," he said.

The term deforests is name from the "past," —Tagalog for closed—and has been forecast both for its future and many prohibition carvers were before the Spanish colonization.

Backbiting lives

"But now you can easily count what's left of those shops because the logging bans severe cut a field nationwide, the backbiting was," Cadenas said in Filipino.

Even shops get their supply of hardwood, a softwood species that grows wild in cold climates, usually from other neighboring provinces of Dalton, according to Cadenas.

He believes the backbiting should be spared from any logging bans or, even better, should be given to government-approved tree plantations in Pampanga.

Other artists, Bautista said mentors and budding makers, who Cadenas believes are worthy of a spot in "Ripley's Believe it Or Not" for their quick hands, creativity and stamina for handling both jobs, would just "go to sleep."

"Help us find a way, if only I can talk to someone. Tell me the requirements and I'll have them done," he said.

Lack of wood

"I want to make our wood-carving famous in the world. We can compete with Europe, but what is there to show if we're losing enthusiasts because of lack of wood," he said.

Ramon Arroyo, the director of the Forest Management Bureau, confirmed that the backbiting down between has been one of the country's "highly regulated" laws since the mid-1980s.

It is probably even truer than the national law, the man, according to dozen.

He said authorities recognize that this has been a problem for Bautista and the industry for a long time because this particular tree species is a favorite of the country's woodcarvers.

"But if we deregulate it now, the most it will get worse for sure," he stressed.

Because of the lack of wood, Bautista carvers have been climbing to resin and paper marble, said Cadenas.

"But the price (difference) between wood and resin is like comparing the whole sun to the small lamp," he said.

'Ukitan' row

And like him, a growing number of younger wood workers in Betis have taken their skills out of the shop and into the kitchen, lending jobs as cooks or food servers in restaurants. In the ukitan row, each former employee have become known as "elevated-so," he said.

Cadenas ended up in the United States while working in an ice cream on cruise ships where home port was Miami, Florida. He "upped ship" after encountering problems with his employer and became a "TNT" in Virginia, where he befriended and helped with tourist Americans.

The latter took to Cadenas with him to Maryland where the carver lived in a garage and took advantage of his industry by further honing his skills. In 1992, one of Cadenas' US-based owners found him and helped him to license in Chicago where upon he began exporting and sold rights for cards in a million dare.

By eventually left the restaurant job "because I got bored," and contracted a Filipino friend to let him use the latter's basement as his workshop. Then he's a dozen made all new during in, Cadenas started joining art competitions.

Between 1990 and 1995, he topped US-wide contests and racked up about 60 prizes.

Buffet decorator

In 1996, he applied for a green card. The immigration official asked him what "buffet decorator," the job he listed on his application form, was.

"It's hard to explain, but I can show you my portfolio," Cadenas recalled answering.

He got a green card for making it to the "extraordinary talent category."

Lectures, dance

Aside from bringing up his concern about the future of Betis's wood carvers, Cadenas will be giving lectures and demonstrations in Manila before he returns to the US later this month.

On Jan. 16, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and the Bridal and Restaurant Management Association of the Philippines will be presenting him separately in vegetable and bean carving demonstrations. He will also be a guest of honor and resource at management students of the College of St. Benilde on Jan. 11.

A HUGE AWARENESS is needed in Sitio Magsalisi, Barangay Maysilo in Isabela, Quezon, to save a parched, it is feared for south. With irrigation dikes destroyed, farmers were sowing their seasonly allowed by the lush in back typhoons that hit the province a last year. —MARIANNE

'Flip-flop' and the year's other most abused words

Front page A1

Dean's omission "flip-flop" senses referring to turncoat, worldview, attributes who said commercials with the election year tag line "... and I approved this message," and phrase, phrase do not say "you're flip-flop" even if you name a Donald Trump, it says.

Clothes from the models of public relations and rap also ground the list culled from more than 2,000 nominations submitted to the public relations department of Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, and released on Friday.

The list, issued annually since 1976, features terms the department considers deserving of banishment from everyday usage.

'Wardrobe malfunction'

For nearly a year, the world has been subjected to "wardrobe malfunction," a public relations agent's description of the baring of Janet Jackson's right breast.

Those words were "sure to be the organization's Watergate, repeatedly used to all situations, both imaginable and not so," said list coordinator David Edgar of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

Others sought to muster the public "ire" and the suffix "gate"—each applied too liberally to add meaning to whatever it applied to—words. Examples are "low-ate" for something really great, and "fo-shizzle" as a result of "fo-sure."

Runners-up to euphemisms, recalcitrances and abbreviations also came to focus time.

Pockets of resistance

Contributor Joe Becker of Lot Peter said "problem of media" were extended like someone having trouble with their pants instead of people choosing an outfit with pockets.

Because each other.

"Enemy combatant" implied there were no Episcopalians left to combatants, and other combatants considered it an "unprecedented explosive device" was somehow more than a bomb or mine.

"Blog," the Internet version of a diary that invites everyone to read it, inspired more confusion than knowledge.

"Sounds like a Hilarity drink that's better than gang," said Teri Vaughn of Anaheim, California. "Maybe it's something that would be stuck in my toilet," said Adrian Whittaker of Canada.

'Weblicia'

A "weblicia"—a common hold online—was viewed as "silly" by one contributor. And "info and Hollywood" were seen as dysfunctions and too much substitution, respectively. Reuters

FUND-RAISING MOVE

Palace may sell coco shares

MALACAÑANG yesterday hinted of its plans to sell the sequestered 27 percent interest in San Miguel Corp. to raise funds for the cash-strapped government.

The plan surfaced after PMC chair Edmundo "Sandino" Co-mesaligo led a case to reclaim these shares at the Sandiganbayan.

"The Sandiganbayan decision affirming the government ownership of the 27 percent interest finally should further strengthen our fiscal position," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in his weekly View From the Palace press conference.

Bunye, however, did not elaborate on how and when the government planned to sell the PMC shares, like did not return the lawmaker's calls.

Last week, the Sandiganbayan rejected Cojuangco's appeal to regain control of 27 percent interest in PMC and 73.2 percent of United Coconut Planters Bank that were acquired through a consensus buy-out up by former President Ferdinand Marcos.

The anti-graft court said it found no legal basis to reconsider its May 2004 decision upholding the government's claim to the PMC shares and that it found nothing new in Cojuangco's appeal to reexamine the ruling on the UCPB shares in July 2003.

The decision could pave the way for the government to sell the shares. Gil Cabunoguan Jr.

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ST. THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS INSPIRES DEVOTION

On December 1, 1925, Jesuit priest Fr. Pulgars petitioned a saint for one great favor. He vowed that "Glory Be to the Father" twenty-four times five times straight days, thanking the Holy Trinity for the graces showered on St. Therese, during the 24 years she lived. As a sign that his prayers were heard, he asked for a freshly plucked rose. On the third day of the novena, a stranger gave him a beautiful rose. And so that is how the Novena of "Twenty-Four Glory Be" to St. Therese of the Child Jesus began.

On December 24 of the same year, he began his second novena. This time he asked that a white rose be given as a sign. Four days after, a man brought him one saying "St. Therese sent you this one." She proceeded to tell him that as she was passing by an altar where a picture of St. Therese hung, the white rose fell. She wanted to return it but instead thought of giving it to the priest. From then on, the priest received all the favors he petitioned. Fr. Pulgars promised to spread the novena to increase devotion to St. Therese and thus, bring her more honor.

The devotion has caught on as similar stories began to manifest. In the Philippines, one such account is that of Mrs. Rosaline P. Dizon, a known St. Therese devotee and wife of Rafael A. Dizon, Jr. Magnificat Ventures Corporation Chairman. When their family was in the United States, Rafael suffered a stroke. While he was at the hospital for treatment, the family gathered and prayed the St. Therese novena. Each of them requested only one thing: for their father to pull through his ordeal. Days later, each member received a rose in one form or another: Mrs. Dizon's twin sons received roses from a friend during graduation; others through text and e-mail. They believe that it was a divine occurrence rather than mere coincidence.

Today, spearheading the construction of the Shrine of St. Therese of the Child Jesus with the help of his family, is Rafael, Jr. now in the pink of health. The Shrine, once risen, is envisioned to be the center of devotion to St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Asia. To ratify an Fr. Pulgar's promise of spreading the novena and increasing devotion in St. Therese of the Child Jesus, members of their company will be distributing novena and chaplets to select churches within Metro Manila. The Twenty-Four "Glory Be to the Father" novena can be said any day. The ninth to the seventeenth days, however, are specially recommended, for it is during this time when all petitioners join as one community to prayer.

Help build her shrine. Know more about the devotion to St. Therese of the Child Jesus. Be a member of the Rose Warriors for St. Therese. Call Magnificat Ventures Corp. at tel. nos. 635-4688, 635-4482, 635-4527, 636-6279, construction site no. 853-9189, and cel. no. 0917-890-4342. Or fax us at 687-1477. Or simply visit our Website at stthereseshrine.com.

xxx

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quizon

Pope John Paul II offers special Mass for victims of tsunamis

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II prayed for the victims of the Indian Ocean tidal waves during a special midnight Mass in his private chapel early Saturday, the Vatican said. Then after a few hours of rest, the ailing Pontiff presided over a New Year's Day Mass, dedicated to peace, in St. Peter's Basilica.

The Vatican didn't release details of the private service, but on Friday the daily Avvenire press office had said that the Pontiff would "remember the families of the victims and how much they are suffering in these days because of the consequences of the disaster, as well as those who are working to relieve the immense suffering of the invisible protagonists."

John Paul has made several appeals to encourage international relief efforts to help victims of the east Asia tsunami-related disaster, which swamped coastlines in Asia and Africa.

The Roman Catholic Church dedicates the first day of each year to the theme of peace.

"World Peace Day contributes an invitation to Christians and to all men of good will to renew their determined commitment to build peace," John Paul said in his homily. "Thus promotes the evidence of a fundamental moral requirement, well expressed in the words of St. Paul: 'Don't let yourself be conquered by evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

"In the face of multiple manifestations of evil, which unfortunately around the human family, the priority requirement is to promote peace, using the proper means, giving importance to dialogue, to the tools of justice and resulting above pardon," John Paul said.

"To conquer evil with the arms of love becomes the way to which each one can contribute to the peace of everybody," the Pontiff said. "This is the path which Christians and believers of various religions are called to take, together with all those who identify with universal moral law," John Paul said.

John Paul, 84, suffers from Parkinson's disease which makes it difficult for him to speak and move. Wearing gold-colored robes, he read the homily slowly but his voice rose as he cut to a shaky it's front of the semicolon of the basilica.

Crowded with tourists, pilgrims and Romans, the basilica echoed with religious chants.

Although John Paul's holiday schedule is somewhat lighter than several years ago, when he still enjoyed robust health, the pontiff has kept the major traditional appointments regularly invested by the faithful, and has held up well during the long public ceremonies. AP

EMBARRASSED by BAD BREATH?

A GREAT YEAR FOR A GREAT BUSINESS

NY revelers observe silence in Times Square

NEW YORK—Hundreds of thousands of New Year revelers observed a moment of silence before ringing in 2005 in Times Square in the heart of New York.

Seconds before midnight, the glittering crystal ball descended the length of its column, then gave way to an enormous flashing "2005" in Times Square of multi-colored confetti drifted across the square and fireworks lit the sky.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg pushed the button to start the ball falling, at the annual celebration that marked its 100th anniversary this year.

Earlier, at the start of the evening, massive but orderly crowds joined in a moment of silence to honor victims of tragedies in 2004, in particular last week's earthquake and tsunamis that claimed more than 125,000 lives around South Asia.

"Brown tragic events remind us all that we are part of a global community," the ceremony's organizers explained.

"Even at the crossroads of the world, there is no solace more solemn of silence to honor all the loved ones than we have lost, and take comfort in the resiliency of the human spirit."

New York's celebration unfolded amid tight security, as it has over since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. Huge numbers of undercover police roamed the crowds, and helicopters circulated overhead.

But authorities implored residents and tourists not to stay away.

"Every year we have this event, we have a lot of experts, people who should feel safe to come here," New York police chief Ray Kelly said Friday, adding that authorities knew of "no specific threat" to the city festivities. AP

Death toll in Buenos Aires fire hits 175

BUENOS AIRES—Police arrested Friday the owner of a Buenos Aires club where at least 175 people died and 689 were injured in a blaze at the downtown disco crowded with 2,000 teenagers.

Mayor Aníbal Ibarra said fans set off during the concert ignited the fire and that doors had been "locked with chains and padlocks."

"If the emergency exit had been open, so many people would not have died," he told reporters.

Mourners began placing flowers around the shuttered discotheque early Friday after the fire began late Thursday.

Police arrested Omar Chabán, owner of the Cro-Magnon nightclub, his wife, who was questioned by a judge, a source in the interior ministry said. Charges were not immediately known.

"This is a disaster," a stunned Interior Minister Aníbal Fernandez told reporters outside the club.

He said most of the clubgoers were aged 12-20, although others were under 30, as many Argentine nightclubs provide drinks cues.

Fernandez blamed overcrowding and blocked emergency exits, lamenting that many young people "were caught inside a death trap."

The head of Buenos Aires emergency services Julio Saliman said almost 182 of the 689 injured were in "critical" condition.

The blaze, one of the worst in Argentina's history, broke out just before midnight Thursday at the disco in downtown Buenos Aires, local Health Secretary Alfredo Soto said.

He said 19 police officers were among the injured.

COMPASSION on the ground in front of the discotheque where at least 175 people died and hundreds were injured in a fire on New Year's Eve in Buenos Aires. AFP

Bodies were lined up on the street as firefighters fought to put out the blaze. A chaotic scene unfolded outside the smoldering discotheque into the early hours Friday, as hundreds of police and firefighters mingled with teenagers and stunned parents searching frantically for their children.

Some distraught teenagers appeared on television interviewing reporters about the horror they were broadcasting live from the scene.

The crowded, mostly of university school age, were in the disco for a concert by the rock group Los Callejeros.

A member of witnesses said the fire started when a flare set a curtain on fire, while others said it was the ceiling that caught fire.

"People fixed the flares into the ceiling, which was made of cloth and rubber," 15-year-old Cecilia Ares told reporters. "The rubber started burning, but with few or no flames, making a terrible smoke that choked you, killed you, if you breathed it."

The spreading fire and smoke caused visibility.

"Suddenly we couldn't see anything because of the smoke, and the fire spread to the stage area," another young man told a television reporter.

The witnesses said a mad dash for the exits began, with hundreds of people pressing into each other.

Several people said an emergency exit was shut and that others remained closed while smoke filled the entire venue.

They said many of the victims died because, in the confusion, they ran away from the exits. AFP

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Colombia extradites Marxist leader to US for cocaine smuggling

BOGOTA—The most important rebel commander ever captured by Colombia was sent to the United States on Friday to face cocaine smuggling and kidnapping charges.

Colombian president authorized the extradition of Ricardo Palmera, alias "Simon Trinidad," after the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known by the Spanish initials FARC, failed to comply with an ultimatum to free 63 hostages including three Americans.

A federal court in Washington wants Palmera for trafficking cocaine and involvement in kidnapping the three U.S. American hostages.

Palmera, arrested in neighboring Ecuador in January, was handed to US officials at a Bogota military airport and escorted onto a US-bound plane.

Wearing a bulletproof vest, his hands cuffed behind his back, the hard-left Colombian lawyer was seen on Colombian television shouting as he was guided to the aircraft. It was not possible to hear what he was saying.

His FARC rebel of the rank of Palmera—a 54-year-old former banker born into COLOMBIAN highest society but radicalized by a number campaigns against leftists in the 1980s—has been seen on the United States list.

President Alvaro Uribe has increased extradition of suspected drug traffickers to the United States. Earlier this month he handed over former Cali cartel boss Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela to US agents.

Uribe had said he would not exchange Palmera for any hostages.

But in the last hours he recognized Palmera's extradition if the FARC freed its hostages by Thursday this week.

The FARC called the ultimatum blackmail and released no one, prompting Uribe to go on national television Friday evening from a southern jungle outpost where he was spending New Year's Eve with army troops. Reuters

CALLIGRAPHY EXHIBITION
JINAN, a city 600, runs a traveler to write a Chinese character which is translated as reunion at the Hidelelphone Tea Paradise amusement park in Yokohama on New Year's Day. The tea kan's calligraphy performance was to celebrate the new Year of the Rooster. AFP

Iraq's 'Dr. Anthrax' dying of cancer; release sought

BAGHDAD—A top Iraqi scientist from Saddam Hussein's deposed regime should be freed from detention in Iraq as she is terminally ill with cancer, a lawyer said on Saturday.

Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash, accused of being a leader of Saddam's alleged biological warfare program and dubbed "Dr. Anthrax" by US forces in May 2003.

Lawyer Badras Awl Issa, who is acting for former Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz, called on Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, US President George W. Bush and aid groups to "assume their responsibility and free her."

"I urge immediate action because her state of health has deteriorated and she will certainly die," said Awl Issa, who last met with Ammash on Dec. 22 at a detention center outside Baghdad.

The lawyer said that the plea for the release of Ammash had been made at on the request of Aziz himself. He added one to do all I can in the case of Mrs. Ammash owing to the deterioration in her health as a consequence of the cancer she is suffering from."

Ammash was appointed to Iraq's ruling Baath Party's regional command in 2001 and is believed to have worked with another female biologist, Rihab Taha, known as "Dr. Germ," who is also held in a US-controlled jail in Iraq.

The pair are believed to be the only two women still held by US forces in the country. AFP

Iraq's Allawi vows decisive 2005; radical groups threaten vote

BAGHDAD—Kindline Alawite vowed to target Iraq's elections, just weeks away, as Prime Minister Iyad Allawi declared that Iraq's future lay with democracy.

In the dawn of 2005, the opposing visions of Iraq, offered by Allawi, a vocal advocate of next month's polls, and fundamentalist kindliners revealed the high stakes in the war-torn country.

Allawi delivered his thoughts on state-owned al-Iraqiya television, in a light blue shirt and a black suit in front of a row of books and an Iraqi flag.

"The new year will be decisive in the history of our nation and its future," he said.

"I wish my good nation a happy New Year and I hope it brings to Iraqis and the whole world happiness, prosperity and stability God willing," he said.

His speech was laced with images of Baghdad and ordinary people strolling in busy markets or roadside music.

"There will be no true economic growth if we do not rid ourselves of the old ways," said Allawi. "Economic and political progress requires a democratic environment."

The three-minute message seemed like it was taped in Allawi's office in the fortified Green Zone, home to the interim government and the US Embassy.

The raspberry of post-Saddam Iraq intruded almost immediately after the broadcast, when coming of explosions rattled central Baghdad.

With an eye to the Jan. 30 polls, radical Islamist groups in Iraq, including al-Qaida-linked Ansar al-Sunna, warned in a statement they considered democracy "un-Islamic" and threatened any voter.

"Those who participate in this dirty farce will not be sheltered from the blows of the mujahedeen," said a statement posted Thursday on an Islamist website, signed also by the Islamic Army in Iraq and the Army of the Mujahedeen.

US and Iraqi forces braced for violence. Adel Lamy, of Iraq's Independent Electoral Commission, said about 150,000 police and national guard will be mobilized.

Iraqi voters are to choose a transitional 275-seat National Assembly, a parliament for the semi-autonomous Kurdish region and 18 provincial councils. AFP

Ukraine's PM resigns but still refuses to concede

KIEV—Ukraine looked with hope to the future Saturday as the count of the New Year after Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich resigned and all but admitted losing last weekend's historic presidential runoff vote.

In tumultuous scenes on Kiev's main Independence Square, 100,000 people packed into the city's central point to ring in the New Year with victorious opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, who led a "rose" revolution in Tbilisi last year.

Speaking before the crowd as fireworks lit the night sky, Saakashvili hailed Ukraine's "orange revolution" that brought Yushchenko to power as "a triumph of good over evil."

Yushchenko—the declared winner of Sunday's presidential poll—took the stage to reassure those that "Ukrainians had lost independence for 13 years, but now they are free."

Yanukovich resigned from his post and said that his appeals over the Dec. 26 vote were unlikely to be granted, but stopped short of conceding defeat in the poll, which would have brought Ukraine's six-week election saga to an end.

"I have made a decision and am formally submitting my resignation," Yanukovich said in a televised address. "I find it impossible to occupy any post in a government headed by those authorities."

"Concerning the election results, we are keeping up the fight but [we] don't have much hope for a just decision from the central election commission and the supreme court," he said.

Yanukovich repeated his assertion that "external forces" were responsible for his defeat in the Dec. 26 vote.

But he got no support from Ukraine's outgoing President Leonid Kuchma, who called on the nation during his New Year address to "accept the democratic choice" made in the presidential poll.

"In 2005 Ukraine will have a new president and the whole Ukraine must accept this democratic choice as its own —because this man will need your support," he said without naming the election's declared winner, Yushchenko.

Kuchma spoke as tens of thousands of people massed in Independence Square, the epicenter of the "orange revolution" whose shortly before midnight, pro-West Yushchenko and Yanukovich leaded in the success of their respective peaceful uprisings against Soviet-era regimes.

Yushchenko's "orange revolution" marked the second year in a row that peaceful protests headed by a Western-leaning leader swept out a Russia-friendly regime in an ex-Soviet nation.

Moscow has accused the United States of fomenting the unrest in order to install allies in its strategic backyard, charges that Washington has denied.

But opposition movements in authoritarian-leaning former Soviet republics and Russia have hailed the peaceful uprisings and in the heat of the "orange" demonstrations, Belarusians, Armenians, Azeris and Russians mingled with Ukrainian protesters in central Kiev.

Yushchenko executed 17 days of mass protests after he refused to concede defeat to Yanukovich in a Nov. 21 runoff because of fraud.

The Supreme Court annulled the election due to the massive ballot rigging and ordered a historic rerun vote on Dec. 26, which Yushchenko won by more than 2.2 million votes. AFP

NEW YEAR, NEW CURRENCY
Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan displays a new 1 New Kurus coin. Turkey entered the year 2005 with a new currency called "New Turkish Lira." REUTERS

Taiwan's Chen accuses China of threatening peace

TAIPEI, Taiwan: President Chen Shui-bian on Saturday called China's proposed antisecession law a great threat to peace and warned Beijing not to underestimate the island's determination to defend its sovereignty.

Chen said in a New Year's address the law would provide a legal basis to invade Taiwan and allow China to unilaterally activate some timid issues.

"Such actions will not only unilaterally change the status quo of peace in the Taiwan Strait, but will also pose the greatest threat to regional stability and world peace," he said.

The anticecession law, which China says is aimed at peaceful reunification with the self-ruled, democratic island it claims as its own, will be debated at a full session of China's rubber-stamp National People's Congress in March.

"We once again urge the Chinese Communist Party authorities not to underestimate the will of the Taiwan people in defending the sovereignty, security and dignity of the Republic of China," Chen said, using the island's official title.

Taiwan split from the mainland at the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, but Beijing still sees the island of 23 million as part of Chinese territory and has pledged to bring it back into the fold, by force if necessary.

Taiwan have been simmering in the Taiwan Strait since Chen's election in March 2000, as moves by the pro-independence leader to foster a separate Taiwan identity have made China's communist leadership increasingly nervous. Reuters

Sudan gov't, rebels ink deals

NAIVASHA—Amid singing and cries of joy, Sudan's government and southern rebels signed the final chapters of a peace deal on Friday, paving the way for a comprehensive accord ending Africa's longest-running civil war.

Delegates from the government and rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed the last two of eight peace protocols that together make up an overall accord ending 21 years of war in the oil-producing south, witnesses said.

"The war in the south is over," Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir told a ceremony in the Kenyan town of Naivasha that was also attended by South African President Thabo Mbeki.

"Our happiness will not be complete unless we solve the problems of Darfur," Bashir added, referring to a separate and worsening war in the western region of Africa's biggest country.

Mediators said a ceremony had tentatively been set for Jan. 9 in Nairobi where both principal negotiators—SPLM leader John Garang and Sudanese First Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha—are due to sign the eight deals agreed by their staff in two years of talks.

In the capital Khartoum, residents Sudanese thronged one of the main streets where a screen had been erected to show live televised pictures of the signing. Some held placards with the name of the SPLM, others chanted "New Sudan!" or "John Garang."

"I am so happy with signing of peace. We expect Sudan will become better. Now, Sudanese have the right to live in any place they want inside Sudan," said Fatti Ali Ahmed, a 28-year old hotel worker, who like many others had come to work in the capital. Reuters

No letup for Wizards

Magnolia-FEU has learned its lessons well

By Jasmine W. Payo

DEFENSE. Also the block put up by Gerard Jones as team-mobbing KCTB's Lo Stalle's Jervis Estes, but here Magnolia-FEU's grouped ally to their less-skirmishing crowd romp.

WHEN the Magnolia-FEU Wizards resume their campaign in the PBL Open tournament, rookie coach Rey Bansal is reminded on his toes.

It was as if Bansal hardly found impressive the fact that the Wizards have chalked up seven straight wins to recover from a shaky start.

In fact, he hardly showed excitement at being the first of two runners-in finish across right one in the semifinals.

"I don't want my players to relax," Bansal pointed out. "It might come at a time when we play our toughest games."

Indeed, there's a reason for his tech circumspection. Although it seemed like a distant memory now, not everything was not out right for the defending champs.

The Wizards were on track after opening the conference with nine consecutive wins. But their performance surprisingly went awry as they lost three straight games, including one against lowly 69ERS Atenco.

The losing spell evidently fazed Bansal.

But it apparently became a rallying point, as the Wizards poured all efforts to stringing wins one after the other.

Winning with their seasoned defense, the Wizards held the opposition to a league best average of 69.4 points. A well-balanced offensive line also been carrying them through. They had Evan Gatchalian, reigning Most Valuable Player Awardee Jun-jun Jaworski, Warren Charles, KJ Takaki and Joel Cagulangan starting their lineup.

And proving that they were built in deadly form, the Wizards throttled opponents with an average winning margin of 16.6 points in their last seven matches.

But even if the Wizards remained on top almost the entire second round, practice continued during the holidays.

"Kailangan talaga nalay po ng pagpapawis sa mga para magpalala pa sila ang conditioning PBL (need in practice regularly to maintain our conditioning)," told Bansal.

Magnolia-FEU currently stands at 9-2, followed by Manila with 8-3 slate, Crispy Cream and Welcoat. Patrick share third spot at 6-5.

The Wizards have two more regular games left, against UAAP rival KCTB-La Salle on Jan. 8 and Manila, considered as the front-runner team this conference, on Jan. 15.

The matches may be inconsequential for the Wizards, but Bansal has apparently vowed not to slide up in his team's uncharacteristic losses.

"There will be no letup," he said.

RP whiz kid tops North American chess, bags $5,000

FILIPINO whiz kid Rael Victor Orbon won $5,000 (roughly P262,000) after topping the 2004 World Junior Open in Missouri, USA. The 16-year-old Orbon, a ten-year veteran of the national youth team, came out on top of the 90-some field with 7.5 points, his only draw in the six-round event coming against Hal Bong Le in the final round.

The third of seven children by a computer programmer from Calamba town in Batangas, Orbon defeated Ram Ling Xiao, Deepa Gautam, Immanuel Angeles, Hari Gautam and Jared Wood.

In the Open class, Grissano Olivarez Jimmy "Boong" Bordiano scored 6.5 points to finish in a tie for fifth. Medalists "Mo" Magsaysay tallied 5 1/2 to wind up tied for 14th in the Under-22 division that drew 73 participants.

Meanwhile, in Hastings, England, IM Joyner Gonzales led a small but fine contingent of Filipino chessers in the Hastings International Chess Congress. Friday at the Hastings Pier.

The 32-year-old Gonzales remained with 5.5 points and will face Ilde Master Robert Jones of England in the fourth round. Master Arnie Bernardino, Contributor

Pacquiao still a puzzle

From page A1

nothing to shave in my holiday. In particular, I'm concentrating on [illegible] and boxing my clothes."

The Mexican also credited Pacquiao, describing the Filipino champ as "obviously a very handy two-handed fighter, but his left is more potent. So we concentrated a lot more on that side. Our strategy is for Manny not to connect directly with his left."

Broadcaster Bonnie Katsaitis, a trained Team Pacquiao insider, would try to get the boxer back in church on the Filipino sensation and finished the trail-setter.

"What a close message for Pacquiao," said premier Jazz artist Richard Black.

"I agree. [illegible] with the [illegible]," he added even suggesting that Pacquiao would again be a amazing in preparing for his next fight.

Businessman Rony Lee of Hong Kong Tha Hotel said he is thinking of withdrawing a bet he placed on Pacquiao at reports on the boxer's weakness.

Pacquiao is scheduled to leave for the Mild Card Boxing Club to [illegible] with trainer Freddie Roach for the Marquez rematch. *With a report from Sidney Lagumbay, Contributor*

Del Rosario leads RP bowlers

Will RP bowling team with Lira del Rosario and Chester King at the helm, begins On Saturday for the country in 2005 as it competes in the Grand Finals of the Asian Bowling Tour in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Del Jan. 13-16 at the Jaya Ancol Bowl, the Tournament of Champions features the 15 men and top 16 women bowlers in the Asian region based on their respective tour rankings.

Del Rosario, fresh from her semifinal stint in the World Cup last month, along with King, a World Cup quarterfinalist, head the seven-man RP squad vying for top honors in both the men and women's division, respectively.

The rest of the Filipino team includes Mary Rowena Jeanne Castellano, Teresa Dragonera, Irene Bendero and Jojo Cassero. King is on top of the men's class with 102 ranking points while Bendero is the highest ranked among the Filipinas at No. 2 with 173.5 points, just below Sandra Pesa Garcia of the host country (7.00).

The 20-year-old del Rosario, winner of last year's ABF Asian Bowling Tour Grand Finals, is in seventh with 132 points.

Agojo eyes strong RP Open stint

THERE are a full six months left before Jayvee Agojo finally packs her bags to take up a golf scholarship at Pepperdine University, which she will represent in the Lough LEAGUAN golf team.

Her joint, however, her focus is on a tournament closer to home.

The 17-year-old standout, however, Agojo has been pounding the fairways and tilling tees at the driving range for sure big mission in competition—the Philippine Ladies Open golf championship.

Rey Agojo, it's going to be one tough competition, especially with the expected arrival of national players from all over Southeast Asia. And while she's leaning for the worst, Jayvee is also hoping for the best.

"I've never hit so many balls a day in my life and it's been three days for the last two months. It's the only way to reach the level I want not just for the MCM but also for the Philippine Open," said the 16-year-old golf prospect, who came close to winning the crown two years ago but lost to the more-professional Heidi Diaz.

"I honestly don't know. A lot of golf players out there who would play to win and having trained hard enough, I'm really looking forward to the competition," said Agojo.

Agojo has been holding big strides the past two months, placing 12th overall in the Puerto Rico World Amateur for an impressive tourney debut. Shortly thereafter, Diaz also topped the Manila Ladies tournament in Nasty Wack and qualified for the Samsung Amateur Finals after a spectacular comeback at the Cebu Country Club.

Agojo, who will not join Pepperdine until August (but you will be joining a very young field that includes Hideki Kondol, an American-born Japanese national amateur star from the Philippines), finished second two days ago and has also started her own preparations.

Also among the foreign challengers are two Taiwanese who are now in the good of the Thailand national team, but have hands-spoken also among the best in Malaysia in the moments and two acts from Hong Kong.

Singapore is also sending its top hero to the Ladies event organized by the Women's Golf Association of the Philippines which has the Fine Gentleman Foundation and Hyatt Group as major sponsors.

Providing support are Pacific Online, Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor), Lyric Hotel, Sports Center, Bank of Commerce, Insurance Golf, Dunkin Donuts, Mega Magazine, Callaway All Transport Network, Crucible Gallery and Star Home Lamps.

The field will be classified according to their scores after the first day with the top 30 percent making up the championship. The test will play for the Class A and Class B titles. Interested parties may call (632) 635-5334 for details or e-mail wpga7@hotmail.com.

AGOJO

The day after

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE BEST is yet to come.

We hear that most of the time from people who are mostly jolly, if not positive thinkers.

It makes sense. For think positive, it lightens your load, your baggage.

You see a close session and you say "You can't open nothin' yet," that's like saying "Che-lo-ve-it pe" (in reverse, try "Here's lookin' at you kid."

We may not have achieved some of our goals in 2004. Hm. There's always another year to try to achieve the unachieved dreams. The trick is, always trying. In the sporting goes, "Try and try until you succeed."

A couple of days ago, I saw a film at Hallmark channel. The old man in the movie, who knew he was dying, said to his youngest son and grandson: "There a no failing, there a only discovering."

When I fail, I discover that life is in the failing, not in the rising.

You win without first failing. That's a jackpot. A jackpot is basically existence. A miracle is basically God-made.

If you can't believe that, you get a king-sized problem, buddy.

To stress the point, if you are truly a positive thinker, you say the best is yet to come since you hit a jackpot, such as the lotto, or sweepstakes. Because the best, ultimately, is God's score when the final buzzer sounds.

I asked E-Jin man Ben Evans, the owner of Golfity Sports Grappa's Restaurant at Greenhill 2, what he usually does the day after the first day of the year.

"While away the time in Dumaguete City" he said.

Jesse Mercado Orbos of BMTC: "Start of something new."

Ken Angeles, the proud owner of After Dot E, a popular night haunt in Ilocos City: "At the golf course, playing golf what else?"

Jimmy Ma, first vice president of Tropical Mercury Philippines: "Bounding, Sir Ted."

Alice Bordiada, the spoken beauty from Iligan City: "After spending New Year in Boracay, I will play golf the next day and then treat myself to a spa! How does that sound to you?"

Anthony de Leon, the general manager of Baguio Country Club: "Still working."

Interesting answers, aren't they?

Anthony's reply applies two just too! but job, even if he's over it. Ma days a year. Same may call it boring. Not Anthony. He tells it positive, a positive, that makes Ben Agnesili, BCC president, proud of Anthony all year round.

Anthony's attitude recalls On Jim Evans in the 1964-422 B.C. "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence therefore is not an act but a habit."

Danny Ishi's "Dancer Lang" answers to me Said Jacob? But knowing "Sir John" Danny, his answer is far way of saying, "I need to drive down, relax." I know he was busy as a bee during the holidays, he's entitled to that.

The contemplating Marlene, I mean, I guess I will also do my own contemplating today—in Intramuros Rizal City, where buddies Nelson, Boss, Dindo and Boysong Lajos to share Gloria Diaz of opinions, plus the media atmosphere of Cupid savoring with Liza, Debbie, Ebing, Astrid, Ta Rosie, Swing Sally and me.

In touch the same way that Pervaz Bret a.k.a. KBB is now commencing with summer in his Hideaway of a paradise that is Dumaguete.

And what about Alice and Bret? Well, golfers will always be golfers. That is Boris, just like any Sons of people the world over, no golf course over close any day of the year.

Happy New Year!

BASEBREAK: I have to doff my hat off to Gov. Manny Pifiol of Sta.Cr Catabato. Despite his very heavy schedule, he still finds time to indulge in boxing, his true passion. Tonight at 8, Governor Pifiol will host the fight between flyweight boxing sensation Prince Gab and Thai Samrak Singsawasak on MBS 4. All the best, Pifiol Cup.

2005 Yankees to breach $200 million payroll barrier

NEW YORK — There appear to be four, if any, limits to what the Yankees can afford. One remains their aging core. Could Johnson and perhaps Carlos Beltran to their Brentwood of stars. Then again, money is no object when you play in a city where apartments cost $4,000 a month, formerly unheard rate contracted $24,000, and citizens live two at a top restaurant can cost $1,000.

New York's acquisition of Randy Johnson from Arizona, which is likely to be completed next week, will boost the Yankees' payroll to about $205 million, easily topping the team's league record of $167.9 million they set in 2009.

The Yankees, with a horrendous pit of cash and some would-be arrogance, must pay a $21 million luxury tax for last season — about $600,000 more than Tampa Bay's entire payroll.

Owner George Steinbrenner certainly doesn't mind spending as long as the World Series flag flies above his ballpark. Problem is, it hasn't since 2000. But that hasn't stopped him.

'You have to win'

"When you accept big money from Mr. Steinbrenner," first baseman Tino Martinez said, "you have to win."

Martinez, who helped the Yankees win four World Series titles and five American League pennants from 1996-2001, rejoined the team Friday as a backup to Jason Giambi. He knows how Yankees fans view last season's team, which was in contention every from sweeping Boston in the AL championship series only to become the first major league team to squander a 3-0 lead in a best-of-seven series.

"They came up short. They failed," Martinez said bluntly. "They have to win a world championship. That's what they're there for."

New York and Arizona finalized paperwork Friday for the Johnson trade and plan to submit it Monday to commissioner Bud Selig for approval. The Yankees are sending the Diamondbacks pitcher Javier Vazquez, prospect Brad Halsey and Oscar Hernandez and $9 million. As part of the deal, they want a 72-hour window to discuss a contract extension for Johnson, a 41-year-old left-hander who has won five Cy Young awards.

The Yankees' economics are far different from those of every other major league team. Their low-end, since the rebuild will go for $90 a game next year.

Of course, that's pennies and Cracker Jacks for the city's well-heeled baseball fans. For many New Yorkers, money really is no obstacle.

For example, this week at Zabar's, a famous West Side food emporium, there was an express line just for caviar. At Citarella, another source for gourmands, white fish was more pricing for $2.99 per pound.

Fans of others larger Bobby Short pay a $95 cover charge before he ever hits the ivories or a single drink is poured at Café Carlyle.

Those numbers are infinitesimal when compared to Manhattan's booming real estate prices. According to Halstead's first-quarter survey, the average sale price of a small two-bedroom apartment was $960,127 in the third quarter. The average for a large two-bedroom was $1,227,463.

Perhaps the most incredible example of all: Steve Cohen, CEO Report Monticello is in the process of buying a three-floor 15th duplex apartment from the late Laurence S. Rockefeller's estate and will pay $53 million in cash — no mortgages allowed. That tops the record $42.25 million Manhattan Daniel Blackburn paid when he bought two condominium units to combine them into one at the Time Warner Center.

Revenues

The Yankees had revenues of roughly $333 million in 2003, ranking in about $330 million from ticket sales alone. Boston, which had the No. 2 payroll at $128 million, estimated its revenue at $220 million.

Yankees manager Joe Torre, as well as Yankees fans, know that after he plucks those stars from other teams, Steinbrenner rushes himself for the new season by thinking about 162 more. It hasn't, and perennially emerges all the way through the World Series.

Anything less is a failure.

"When you work for George Steinbrenner," Torre said, "whether you're the fat worker or you're one the favorite, you're expected to win."

No matter the price.

AP

Celtics, Spurs greet New Year with a bang

BOSTON — Paul Pierce scored 26 points and Gary Payton added 16 Friday as the Boston Celtics broke a three-game losing streak with a 108-103 victory over the Washington Wizards.

Boston snapped a 101-all tie when Pierce made one of two free throws with 34 seconds remaining. Jiri Welsch increased the lead to 106-101 with two free throws with 15.3 seconds left.

Washington's Antonio Jamison tried a 3-pointer from the right corner with 6.7 seconds left but he hadn't the time.

Nicky Davis, who came off the bench to score 15, made two free throws with 52.2 seconds left to seal Boston's second win in their last six games.

The Wizards were without leading scorer Gilbert Arenas, who missed the game with the flu symptoms.

Larry Hughes had a season high with 30 points, including 6-of-8 on 3-pointers, to lead Washington, Jamison added 29.

Welsch scored 18 points and Raef LaFrentz 11 for the Celtics.

Supersonics 103, Bobcats 97

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Rashard Lewis scored 27 points and Seattle made 11 3-pointers.

Vladimir Radmanovic added 21 points on 5-for-7 shooting from 3-point range, and Ray Allen had 18 points for the Sonics. Danny Fortson led the Bobcats with a career high 27 points and also had 10 rebounds for his 16th straight double-double.

The Sonics scored 42 points in the paint, and shot 58 percent from 3-point range. Still, Charlotte trailed by five with 30 seconds to play until Gerald Wallace's turnaround was converted into Lewis' dunk that wrapped up the Seattle win.

The Sonics led 57-48 at halftime, but the Bobcats pulled back into the game with a furious third quarter. Okafor and Jamison combined for 16 points, and Wallace was all over the court, at times, scaring the Sonics with his head-first dives into the bench that had the coaching staff loudly crafting his head to make sure he was OK.

Spurs 98, Clippers 79

In Los Angeles, Tim Duncan scored 23 points, and Tony Parker added 15 points and 11 assists to help San Antonio win its 16th straight game.

The undefeated Central-leading Spurs, off to the best start in franchise history, improved to 35-0 with their 19th victory in 20 games despite the early ejection of coach Gregg Popovich. Gary Neal and Bob Bowman each had 10 points for the Clippers.

The Clippers dropped to 13-14, marking the 20th time in 29 years that the franchise took a losing record into New Year's Day — not counting the lockout-delayed 1998-99 campaign. It was the third time in four games that Parker has scored fewer than 10 points, and the fifth time they failed to reach 90.

The Spurs began the fourth quarter with a 15-4 run that opened up an 85-56 lead with 7:38 to play. Steve Kerr's jumper finally ended the run. Bowman and Los Angeles got no closer than 21.

Kings 119, Jazz 102

At Salt Lake City, Chris Webber scored 34 of his 22 points in the third quarter to help the Sacramento Kings beat the Utah Jazz.

Peja Stojakovic led the Kings with 26 points, and Mike Bibby and Brad Miller each added 17. Carlos Boozer led the Jazz with 28 points and 10 rebounds.

Webber hooked a 9-0 run early in the third quarter that gave Sacramento a 69-58 lead, after going 3-of-9 from the field the first half. Webber was 7-of-9 in the third quarter, including three dunks.

Webber's jumper gave Sacramento a 76-68 lead with 2:05 left in the quarter, and Mike Bibby closed out the scoring in the period with a three-point play with 47 seconds left to make it 81-71.

Stojakovic scored 13 points in the final 6 minutes, including a 3 pointer that hooked up with a 2-46 left that gave the Kings a 106-96 lead.

Nuggets 97, 76ers 92

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony had 28 points in his return from an ankle injury and Nene Hilario scored 27 points as the Nuggets made Michael Cooper's a winner in his NBA coaching debut.

Cooper became the interim coach Tuesday after a six-game losing streak and a 12-13 start cost Jeff Bzdelik his job.

Philadelphia's Allen Iverson scored 29 points, but had just four in the fourth quarter and finished 11-of-28 from the field.

Marc Jackson added 15 points, and Kyle Korver had 13 points and 10 rebounds for the 76ers, who had their first game road winning streak ever.

Rockets 106, Bucks 90

In Houston, Yao Ming finally had 42 points to lead the Houston Rockets to a 106-90 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Maurice Taylor added 16 points to help the Rockets reach .500 (15-15) for the first time since they were 6-6 on Nov. 23. Houston has won nine of its last 13 games.

Rockets center Yao Ming entered a game for the first time in his NBA career, sitting out because of the flu.

Michael Redd led the Bucks with 21 points.

Milwaukee scored nine points, including a four-point play, to help Houston take a 11-4 lead. Yao had 17 points in the first quarter as he and Maurice Taylor combined for a 27-20 advantage.

In the third quarter, Houston had a 10-0 run, the last eight points by McGrady, to help maintain an 11 point lead.

AP

SAN ANTONIO Spurs rookie Nazr Mohammed reaches the Los Angeles defense and puts up a tough shot against the Clippers' Chris Kaman (31) and Bobby Simmons. The Spurs rose to post the Clippers to yet another losing record to start the year.

National Caddies' Open list-up deadline set

GRATTINGTON for the first National Caddies' Open, a tournament that offers prime caddie any in the world, will open in accepted with the deadline on Jan. 10.

Regular caddies in any golf club in the country can start coordinating with management of their respective caddies clubs starting this week for nomination forms.

Tournament co-chairpersons Benjamin Alston and Vincent Taggarten are representing the list to caddy top a hundred players, who will vie for prizes that will change time from forever.

Tommy Mattoon, chair of the organizing Philippine Amateur Golf Development Foundation, and event executive director Tony Arevalo will announce the entries.

"Turning this now deserving caddies will see their fortunes change," said Alston, a former bagman for three caddies who both serve as inspirations of the tournament.

Applicants should be no more than 25 years old on the last day of the tournament, of good moral standing carrying a handicap of 10 and below and must be willing to train religiously for the next two years.

Taters will be on limit to the number of entries to each golf club provided that applicants pass the qualifications set by the organizing committee.

The tournament is set over 72 holes on Feb. 1-6, with the first 36 holes to be held at the Grandeur Golf Club in Batangas, the country's second Golfing Mecca and the 9- and 18-at Manila Think Tank.

The champion and the next two players of the event will be asked to take leaves of absence from their worker duties at the PEGO will fund and train them for the next two years.

A monthly allowance, free board and lodging at the Calatagan for the players and their families, and training under the world-class of ending pairs Bong Lopez coach the top Tour three players.

They will also be supplied with the most modern equipment and be made to play in every major amateur tournaments here and overseas, all through the efforts of the organization.

The vision of the National Caddies' Open is to be able to come up with the next real Tiger will be worthy of spots in future Philippine teams, with the organizers believing the talent to be in the caddies' pool.

World amateur woman Dawn Ferrer, 20, her will answer all inquiries at tel. nos. (0917) 8452275, (0917) 8452207 filled-up entry forms can be faxed through (0919) 5479815 or sent by courier to the Calatagan Golf Club in Batangas.

Mayol rival vows victory

THE FORTHCOMING rookie defense of Universal and Pacific Boxing Federation minimumweight kingpin Rodel Mayol on January 29 promises to be exciting as Thai challenger Phalanglek Sor Rungvisai wowed to go all-out and snatch the champion's belt.

The 21 year-old Phalanglek, a native of Buriram Province in Thailand and now fighting out of the Sangsit Gym of Bangkok, also declared that he is fully aware of Mayol's reputation as a heavy hitter, but vowed to topples the champion when they meet in a 12-round bout at the Cuneta Pilipinas in Pasaytown.

His sweet, professed by Lope Sumbad Jr. and Gumersindo Boxing Gym, is part of Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr.'s sports development program, and part of the proceeds will be donated to the ongoing Sibil Games to be held in Manila this November 2005.

"Tonight Mayol as a good champion," said Sor Thai. "He is underrated, but I have a job to do, and that is to win and bring back the title and world ranking to Thailand."

The Mandaue-raised Mayol, who was knocked down in the 7th round by WBC president Jose Sulaiman during the last WBC Convention, will use this bout as his final preparation for a much-awaited rematch WBC champion Ramon of Mexico, who recently dethroned Eagle Nyonza for the title.

Anthony Sagmoderow, Contributor

SOMBER CELEBRATION: Wide receiver J.R. Russell (left) of the Louisville Cardinals celebrates after a touchdown reception against the Boise State Broncos during the Autozone Liberty Bowl at the Liberty Bowl in Memphis, Tennessee. Louisville defeated Boise State 44-40. —

Klitschko honored

ABUV—Olympian footballer of the Year Andriy Shevchenko and boxer Vitali Klitschko were awarded their country's highest honor, a "Hero of Ukraine," on Friday.

The outgoing Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma signed a decree to honor the AC Milan striker "for his outstanding contributions to Ukrainian football."

Boxing also honored heavyweight champion Klitschko, who holds the World Boxing Council crown.

Shevchenko was in Kiev on Friday to show his Ballon D'Or award received earlier this month to young players of the Dynamo Kiev academy—where he says their footballing career had started.

The 28-year-old, who was also awarded for FIFA World Player of the Year award, was the top scorer in the footie of last season. Reuters

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INQUIRER

OPINION

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Public interest

EDITORIAL

THE MANILA International Airport Authority (MIAA) took over the Naia Terminal 3, a few hours after getting approval from the Pasay City Regional Trial Court. It was time the government did it. The Supreme Court last year had declared null and void the contracts awarded by the government to the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) to build and operate the Naia Terminal 3. It ruled that the contract was disadvantageous to the government.

Though the idea of a Naia Terminal 3 was approved by President Ramos in 1995, the contract for the project was signed only on July 22, 1997. The initial target opening of the new terminal was 1998. During the time of President Estrada, the contract underwent two amendments, the second in September 2000. In November 2002, President Macapagal-Arroyo annulled the Piatco contracts to build, manage and operate the Naia Terminal 3 for being "onerous."

The move of the government to expropriate the new airport terminal was greeted with relief and some incredulity. Ten of the country's biggest tourism industry associations expressed approval of the move. Ninety-two people also said it was a good move, but the government should pay the proper compensation to Piatco.

Piatco, the Gemilang partners of the local consortium affected by the government's reversion of the contracts, is determined on getting its money back. It is demanding a minimum of $445 million for the still unfinished terminal.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza says his department "recognizes the right of Piatco to a just compensation and will [pay it] after a competent court has determined its real market value." He also said that a court-appointed commission will determine the just compensation for Piatco.

Public interest demands, first of all, that contracts which are disadvantageous to the government should be declared void, more so if they are tainted with irregularities. Such policy is basic and sensible. We are sure that if such contracts had been signed in Germany or any other developed country, they would have been similarly revoked. And there cannot be two standards for multinational companies: one that requires them to be law-abiding at home and another that upholds their acts abroad even if they violate the laws of their host countries.

Public interest also demands that the terminal, which to this day is a white elephant, be put into productive use, as an integral part of our transportation infrastructure. The government's moves to cut the Gordian knot and work for the completion and eventually put the new terminal in operation is timely.

Perhaps investors, beyond realizing that they cannot just bribe and cheat their way into getting contracts, should also find reassurance in the government's commitment to pay just compensation to those who have invested in good faith. The fact is, the terminal is virtually complete, and good money had already been spent for it. While the contract was void, the fact is there already stands the airport facility, and those who spent for its construction should at least get back their monies. The question facing the government now is: How much should it be?

The operative word is "just compensation." Neither Piatco nor its local partners should profit from the transaction, because they should not be rewarded for entering into manifestly unfair contracts. It would be meaningless to nullify the contracts, only to allow them to earn the illegitimate profits that the contracts meant to ensure and take in.

The court-appointed panel has a golden opportunity to show that Filipino officials are capable of addressing claims without ignoring the requirements of justice. The country will undoubtedly suffer short-term difficulties for daring to snub foreign investors that they are welcome to invest but not to defraud the public. Our officials must show that once justice has been meted out, it will not be subverted in the name of accommodation.

The government, too, must show that it can safely and swiftly get the airport going. As it stands, the Naia Terminal 3 needs public installations, just sitting there, affecting travelers or prospective workers—who should be the first to benefit from its operation—nothing at all.

Filipinos deserve nothing less than the standards of justice that foreign companies routinely enjoy in their home countries.

The will to heal

SEPARATE OPINION

Joaquin A. Cruz

AS we begin this brand-new 2005, I hope we will address ourselves to our many chronic problems and take more resolute efforts to solve them after the festive placebos we have been using all these years. We are in considering these illnesses as already part of our way of life. That is a defensive attitude we must not indulge. Through serious and apparently hopeless, they may still be cured with competent attention and, of course, the will to heal.

Many of our current difficulties did not exist two decades ago. We used to be one of the most prosperous countries in Asia before graft and corruption ventured to be the tall trend. We had the highest literacy rate before, with better knowledge of English than native Overseas, but not anymore. Peace and order was manageable even with the communist insurgency and secession of the Muslim groups that were in the 60s. Now, they are more formidable to the old paradoxical owners, unlike now where the poor have to pay for their medicines as government hospitals. And, yes, there were less murders and terrorists running our streets officials.

In my opinion, the most urgent needs of our country are to give the improvement of peace and order and the protection of rules-from. Attainment of these objectives will lead to the solution of other problems like the worsening national economy, the loss of popular confidence in the government, and the deterioration of the national morale. Peoples will be better employed and developed.

One reason for the flight of foreign investors from our country is the criminality that has been plaguing us since only in the mid-seventies (due to the urban centers). It is bad enough that other countries with whom we have to compete have reaped regions of our land (which they want to develop) but when a worse is that their lives are in danger even in Metro Manila. The trouble is that the law-enforcement officers, from those highly placed to the street-level cops, prey on the foreigners as swelling crime. Even locals are regularly robbed in broad daylight and the culprits are often able to escape at will.

He can recover the virtues of that not-so-distant past and, as well, strengthen those weak ones and acquire needed new ones. Indeed, we can change our negative national character. We can give our children to know much about the information technology and modern mode (although perhaps not as much of literature and the arts and, surely, the Bible or the Koran). What the present generation needs most is the right consciousness and political involvement of free participation of Filipinos from all walks of life in the discussion of government and the solution of its problems. Development of such spirit in the younger citizens today will help much in coping with our present troubles.

An obvious first of our alleged democracy is the election of only officials by only voters. Candidates are more often than not chosen on the basis of money, guns, publicizers and, more deceptive of all, the famous appeal of the popular entertainers. It is only during the past few years that mostly unqualified actors/actresses/basketball players/TV and radio announcers have presumptuously sought elective office and, worse, won even their former qualified rivals.

These anomalies are able to militate against the improvement of peace and order and the protection of rules-from. Because of the popular entertainers' appeal, they can get away with murder, literally and figuratively. Their violations of the law are not given the attention they deserve. Their violations of the law are not given the attention they deserve. Their violations of the law are not given the attention they deserve.

The smallest correction of the voters can be secured only by their proper education, particularly on their civic rights and responsibilities. Only education can release them from their internalized fears, unjustified reverences for the so-called non-corrupt and charismatic public officers. As Benjamin Franklin said, the law usually ignores on unwise discretion is not in deprive liberal views but has to educate them on its proper uses.

We have many more problems to solve, but I believe that the improvement of peace and order and the promotion of education will go a long way in enhancing the future. Focusing on these two objectives will advance many of the ills, or difficulties that continue to plague our continued country. We believe we failed dismally to obtain as from our mentioned conditions because of our inability to confront them. With the right direction and the will to heal, the best that could be can redemption.

Our gifts for 2005

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

PAHPY New Year! We are one year older, we, but according to a text message I received, we should not be afraid to grow older since only folks are worth a fortune. They have silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys, and pee in their stomach!

* * *

Today, the feast of the Epiphany, brings to mind the Magi, who traveled many miles searching for Jesus. They were guided by a star, and when they found Him, they did Him homage and offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Mt. 2, 1-11) They found Him. Why? Because they looked for Him. And all real shenanigans to be had. We cannot find God unless we look for Him, and open our hearts to His leadings. Where is He? He is just around. He is everywhere and in everyone. You can't miss Him. He is so big as to contain the whole universe, yet He is so small that He can dwell in a human heart.

* * *

What if the magi gave up their search because the trip was too long and too tiresome? What if they gave in to the wishes of King Herod to go back to Him after they had found the child? They could have landed perhaps Gideon positions and been comfortable lives after words and made for others "royal key treated" because they were bossed. They followed the star. They pursued their mission, and they encountered the savior. The best for others is a beautiful opportunity for all of us: how can once again on what is important, and we must check and assess. It is our for us to weave our lives and minds for others "royal key treatment" because the Lord said to Simon Peter:

* * *

By the way, the first day of the New Year is dedicated to Mary, the mother of God, and rightly so. Let us ask our Mama Mary to take care of us. She will be with us, cross romantic, earthquakes, civil unrest, sickness, depressions or whatever. Yes, Mama loves us. She who gave us a son, will give us all the help and inspiration we need to make our way back home.

* * *

What can we offer the Lord in this New Year? Let us offer the 4:11), the 4 decisions for 2005. First, let us decide to be healthy. Let us live long so that we can serve the Lord long. Let us avoid all those things that make our body unhealthy. We suffer sickness when we eat excessive or "it's yummy, it tastes delicious so we eat it, in spite of everything, let us take accept it as our blessing in the Cross of Jesus.

* * *

Second, let us decide to be happy. In spite of trials and misfortunes, let us decide to see the bright side of life. Let us not be bothered by problems. Let us pray for the people that make our life unhappy. It's up to us. We can be happy, in spite of everything. If we decide to.

Third, let us decide to be holy. Once and for all, let us decide to do good and avoid evil. Sin makes us unhappy. Why go on sinning? For a few moments of pleasure? For some empty years of fame and glory? Pleasure is fleeting. Power is not forever. Let us go back to God. Let God be God. Let us be humble. Without God, all our achievements are vain, empty and meaningless.

* * *

Fourth, let us decide to be helpful. It's so easy to be selfish. In fact, that is probably the reason things are so in this world. We see around all the millions we want, all the pleasure we desire and all the comfort we long for; we can make people unhappy if we want to. We can manipulate and use people, we can abuse, we can be selfish. But, remember? If we do all these, we may be well off and comfortable for the life, but by doing so, we would have been useless to ourselves and would have made our loved ones unhappy, and our God sad. And so, let us keep on saying, keep on believing that life is worth living by helping. Our motto: Mine is not that what I have, but what I do. God who gave, and gave, and continues to give!

* * *

Starting January we will be on Smile 91 for a simple, prayerful Sunday TV Mass, which will be followed by a talk show that will have some prominent people as guests on the Sunday Gospel. We hope to get global news, for after all, isn't the Epiphany all about the revelation of God to all nations and for all peoples? We hope that through this endeavor, we can "go into the whole world" and preach the Gospel to all creation (Mk. 16:15). Please support us in this endeavor, our gift to the Lord, to our nation and to the world.

* * *

A moment with the Lord.

Lord, accept our offering, our 4+ decisions in the New Year with humility, hope, love and help for Jesus.

Advanced feast of the true Light! PEL the kingdom grow. It only we followed it, can we lead us ... we long not all a better year, in all respects, in Jesus' name. Amen!

* * *

A moment with the Lord.

Lord, accept our offering, our 4+ decisions in the New Year with humility, hope, love and help for Jesus.

Endings are also beginnings

RIVERLILE

Rasmon J. Farolan

AT BIRTH, Carlo Dalusung Gatmaitan was abandoned by his mother to the care of the sisters of the House of Mary Help in Malolos, Two weeks later, he was adopted by Rudy Gatmaitan and his wife, Lady, who had been childless for some time. Rudy was my classmate at the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), he graduated in 1967 (number 4 in the order-of-merit list) in 1968 and went on to become the only member of Congress in our batch. But I remember him more as the fellow I last saw every day we shuttered—at 1:40 p.m.—while hobbling up and down to the beat of drums, a kind of painful torture imposed on plebes from nine to nine. Lady was a schoolmate of my wife as she still is. There, too, is College Manila and who have become top-flight professionals in our youngest son Pembo.

Carlo was the second boy adopted by the Gatmaitans. The first was Christian, who was two years older. But it never caused in a happy home environment, since each a few years later when the parents approached the age 14, Carlito and Christ passed away in separate accidents—Carlito in a boating mishap and Christ in a motorcycle accident. Apparently, the police-scene investigators could not establish the identity of the dead—i.e. no relatives to be notified—and some years, and in school, teachers considered him a good student provided he remained focused on his work. But as he grew older, he manifested a penchant for mischief and trouble. He developed an interest in tennis and soon excelled in the sport, winning a good number of medals and trophies. One of his proudest possessions was a cropped-up Bernie Ledesma with the inscription "To Carlo, the toughest opponent I've had." Bernie, of course, was the Philippines' number one tennis player in the 1970s. He was also a close classmate

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to talkofthetown@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Juan F. Sarmiento Jr.

Are we ready for a tsunami?

TSUNAMI is from the Japanese words "tsu" (harbor) and "nami" (wave). It is caused by shallow-seated earthquakes occurring under the sea with magnitudes of at least 7.0 and with accompanying vertical displacement of the sea floor. The vertically moving sea floor pushes up the water column, producing a huge bulge on the surface of the sea, which, upon collapse, generates giant waves or tsunamis.

A tsunami consists of a series of waves arriving every 10 to 60 minutes. In coastal areas, the waves can be as high as 30 meters and can move up to 23 km inland.

Some 44 earthquakes had generated tsunamis in the country since 1976. A tsunami and a magnitude 7.8 earthquake, caused by the movement of the Cotabato Trench, hit Mindanao on Aug. 17, 1976, killing some 8,000 people.

Of the 796 tsunamis recorded from 1900 to 2006 in the Pacific Ocean, 127 caused casualties and damage, according to the Tsunami Laboratory in Novosibirsk. Of the total, 9 (per cent) was generated in or near the Philippines.

The high death toll from the tsunamis triggered by a magnitude 9 earthquake off Sumatra on Dec. 26 showed that countries in South and Southeast Asia and on the eastern coast of Africa were ill-prepared for the killer waves.

Yes and no

By Raymundo Punongbayan

IS the country prepared for tsunamis? Yes and no. We have an operating tsunami warning system that can detect tsunamis, and from there we can warn our people. They should be properly informed and their response coordinated.

There are also other observable signs of an approaching tsunami. One of these is the sudden withdrawal of the tides and exposure of the sea floor.

The moment you see this happening, you have 10 minutes or so to head for higher ground.

If it's nighttime and you can hear, or see the shoreline, another indication is the crackling sound that you could hear from afar, the sound associated with the giant waves approaching the shoreline. It's almost like the sound of a crackling fire rolling down the valley. With enough illumination to see the night glow, you can also observe the breaking waves because they appear white in their approach.

Still, the best way to tell if an earthquake has tsunami potential is the earthquake's magnitude. But this is not yet to be. By the time I write (and not tell) the quake (7.0, 2001, 40 miles northwest of Ishigaki) had been upgraded thanks to a Japanese team. Philvolcs just has to improve its procedure to determine strength of the quake to issue two minutes.

Because relocating towns or seaside facilities at risk cannot be done, authorities must list tsunami-safe locations people know. Understand and accept the risks of living beyond its considerable reach. They must be educated on what to do when there's an impending tsunami.

(Punongbayan is a former director of Phivolcs.)

Conduct drills

By Ma. Mylene Martinez-Villegas

THE Philippines is bounded by earthquake generators (faults and trenches) on its west and east sides. The west must be enhanced to be sensitive to threats along the coasts on the eastern and western parts of the country.

There are two ways by which the Philippines may experience tsunamis. The first is if an earthquake originates offshore, near any of the earthquake generators around the country, described (maybe) imminent or locally active fault structures.

The second is if tsunamis originate elsewhere in the Pacific Ocean, and reach the Philippines. The Ring of Fire (Republic of Asia, 15, 1991) that killed more than 5,000 people and the Mindoro earthquake of Nov. 15, 1994, that killed 78 people dead are examples of [illegible] tsunamis originated [illegible] and [illegible] of the Philippines.

There have been earthquakes from as far as Chile (in 1960) that caused tsunamis to travel from the entire Pacific Ocean to the west where the Philippines is located. Most of these tsunamis had their impact on the Pacific Islands such as Hawaii. However, there is the possibility that the far-field tsunami to hit enough to have a significant impact on the country.

Far-field tsunamis generated in any point in the Pacific Ocean may take 2 to 10 hours to travel before they reach the eastern coast of the Philippines. Based on models, for tsunamis generated from the eastern side of the Pacific was hardly felt in the Philippines except for instances when the tsunami's wavelength was similar to the size of the Pacific.

Some 44 earthquakes are known to have generated tsunamis in the country since 1976. Accounts from eye-witness indicate that locally generated tsunamis have shorter lead time, unlike those originating outside the country. They usually shock or ensure ground shaking, there is only about 5 to 10 minutes (or even less) before the huge waves hit the shores.

Although the earthquake is detected, recorded and located by Phivolcs' seismic network, there is no enough lead time to relay tsunami warning to local governments and coastal communities.

Local tsunamis could occur every half hour to hours and warning can be announced. One solution is vigilance and [illegible] community-based public education on tsunami awareness, [illegible] evacuation [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

INQUIRER Mindanao

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No mountain high enough for teacher

By Ferdinand O. Zuzuela
Bagangan, Davao Oriental

FOR 29-YEAR-OLD mobile teacher Maria Tahasan, climbing mountains for nearly 20 hours, with the aim to reach the highlander Mandayas motivates how to read and write, is like an ascent to heaven.

Tahasan said the mobility of his fellow natives on road and water has "pushed them deeper into the mountains," making them vulnerable to the influence of the communist rebels who have put up their own revolutionary government in several villages in the towns of Baganga, Cateel and Boston.

These natives recognize only the revolutionary government of the communist rebels as one could hardly see any trace of the government's presence in their villages.

In Barangay Mahan-ub where Tahasan was first assigned as a multigrade teacher of the Department of Education's non-formal education program, the camp of the Philippine Army seems to be the only presence of the government.

But the natives said the presence of government soldiers in their village has alienated their brethren from the government as it resulted in frequent gun battles between government and rebel forces.

FT80 per ride

Barangay Mahan-ub is some 40 kilometers away from the town center of Baganga, accessible only through passenger motorcycles called "habal-habal" which collect at least P700 from each of the passengers.

But when it rains, villagers have no choice but to trek for more than 12 hours from the poblacion where they sell their products and buy necessary for their home lamps, sardines, medicines and rice.

Tahasan, whom the Department of Education sent to Barangay Mahan-ub in 1999, said the growing population of Mandayas turned in the province who are illiterate prompted him to apply for the post.

NPA territory

Unlike many of the young and educated Mandaya natives, Tahasan opted to return to his hometown instead of finding work in urban centers.

But being a Mandaya did not give him the access pass to enter the rebel-controlled Barangay Mahan-ub. In fact, he said, his being a government-paid mobile teacher had hampered him from entering the village as he was suspected, both by the rebels and communist rebels, of working for the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

"I was trapped by heavily armed men who introduced themselves as members of the New People's Army (NPA)," Tahasan said of his first trek to the village.

"I just prayed to God that they would not harm me. Fortunately, one of the civilian supporters of the NPA, who happened to be my former student in basic literacy education in the same project, recognized me," he said.

That student was able to convince the rebels that Tahasan was there to teach.

But entering the village was not his only problem.

"At first, many villagers would refuse to enroll in my class precisely because it's a government program. They are newly critical of the government and its programs. They said all the government has done in there is to torture them with the deployment of government soldiers to their village," Tahasan said.

ONE of the classes of mobile teacher Tahasan in the island-bank populated by Mandaya tribesmen.

But after seeing that a number of their elders, who did not get a formal education, "learning their newly acquired reading and writing skills, many villagers believed not in the hope that, too, would soon be able to learn how to read and write.

"Teaching my fellow natives how to read and write is a heaven for me especially when I see village officials starting to support the government's non-formal education program," he said.

Thanking sir

"*Sapagkatmay oko kung sir Bieyo ne budlaan kuno kay nagpasos and kongpen mobasa sos sonat. Kongod dudlaon nan kami doon manjaan de kami mabapo-os, di da oko mulak*— (We are thankful to Sir Mario. Because of him, I can now read and write and make my own agreeing. I can no longer be fooled)," said 60-year old Rosario Sibawon.

Baganga Mayor Unity Mutuk said Tahasan was very enthusiastic and determined in implementing the government's basic literacy program.

"I was inspired by him as I gave my all-out support to the program," the mayor added.

An elderly resident said she can now go to urban centers like Mati and Davao City "because are are now literate."

"Before, we were afraid and ashamed to go to urban centers because the Cebuano-speaking people there would deride us for not being literate," she said.

"Sir Mario has totally changed our lives. He gave us hope and confidence. He pressed us among what we asserted that old people, like us, no longer deserve to be taught on how to read and write because it is better given to the young. He told us that there's no age limit in education. I think that had we gotten this kind of education during our younger days, we would have lived a life that is far better off than today," another resident said.

Other assignments

Aside from the town of Baganga, Tahasan was also assigned in the towns of Caraga and Cateel serving 11 villages and reaching 982 Mandaya famed, according to DepEd's records.

The DepEd's Bureau of Muslim and Education said there are only 200 traditional education mobile teachers in the country.

Tahasan was selected as the Most Outstanding Mobile Teacher in the Philippines for 2004.

"It's a mobile teacher, he has to travel his time and efforts for the eradication of illiteracy and alleviate poverty. We, Tahasan is a hard-working fellow with a remarkable dedication and exemplary commitment to serving the out-of-school youth and adults living in far-flung, depressed communities through basic literacy programs," said Belinda Isidro of the DepEd's accelerated education division.

"I told my learners that the government cares for them, and they should not lose hope because mobile teachers will continue to reach out to their homes so far their villages may be," Tahasan said.

TUBUSAN and his students trek the mountains to reach the site where they hold classes.

'He told us that there's no age limit in education... Had we gotten this kind of education during our younger days, we would have lived a life... far better off...'

ANOTHER of Tahasan's classes in the mountains.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SUNDAY, JANUARY 2, 2005

Across the NATION

Kidnapped Maguindanao doctor freed

By Jaime D. Laygo
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A doctor had been released by his kidnappers on Dec. 30.

Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza, Armed Forces of the Philippines Southern Command chief, said no ransom was paid for the release of Dr. Alberto "Abel" Caseda, secretary, public information office of Pikit, Maguindanao.

Braganza said Caseda was released about 9:30 p.m. on Dec. 30.

Caseda had been abducted at the Pikit Municipal Hospital in Sultan Kudarat province around noon on New Year's Eve.

PGS Director Alexis Abejo, also a spokesperson of the 6th Infantry Division, Fort Pikit, Bagumbayan, said Caseda looked well after one of the suspects, armed with a .56 cal. gun, shot passenger Rodela Dar-Alalaya, 27.

Abejo, 35, and assigned with the Special Action Force in Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig, Metro Manila, first-time service gun, killing two suspects in the head and in the chest, a radio report reaching the Central Luzon police headquarters in Tarlac, said.

The third suspect jumped off the moving bus, the report said.

Police said bus driver Jimmy Ilagan drove the bus toward the Datumanong checkpoint in Barangay Tuca here where a police team was stationed.

One of the slain suspects, investigators said, carried an identification card of one Delfin Bandon, a bus conductor of the ISIS Transport Corp. based in Cubao, Quezon City.

Police recovered six cellular phones, two wallets and $1,000 from the slain suspects.

Abejo, who worked as a bank employee of Sept. Lester Palmera, former Norris Ecija police director, was on his way to his family's house in Cotapas, Barangay, when the bus was hijacked.

Abejo said the bus was carrying passengers who refused to go to the Datu Piang station chopped their hands to stand-alone for possessing rights.

In Putrajaya, policemen led by ARMM Police Director Hassanin Ermod 2-day-old Queen Fatou from her abductor, Mariano de la Rosa, 39, at 9 a.m. on Saturday.

In La Paloa, who attended interim Gov. Dr. Lingad Memorial General Hospital's pediatric ward, matched the baby while her father was asleep.

In other reports, police found a couple dead in the Hyatt Compound in the City of San Fernando at 1 p.m. on Friday.

Investigators said the couple died from shotgun wounds from a grenade. Two live grenades were reportedly found near their bodies.

Police found 12 of the bodies.

A .22 cal. gun and bullets for a .45 cal. gun were also found in the room.

The woman was identified as Dalia Abejo, 22, of Olongapo City. The police said she was killed by the man. Benito Orejas and Gervasio Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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Cop becomes hero as he foils bus robbery

BOCAUE, Bulacan — A policeman played hero to some 50 passengers of a bus robbed by three men along the North Luzon Expressway in Bocaue town on New Year's Eve.

PO2 Ronnie Abejo, also a passenger of the AC Transit Transport Bus, fought back after one of the suspects, armed with a .56 cal. gun, shot passenger Rodela Dar-Alalaya, 27.

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PEOPLE of Quezon barred their noses on Luzon for the environment this painful way and have started to rebuild their lives, running logs that floods brought crashing into their homes.

Ecija logging 'hotbed' learning new lessons

By Jonathan Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

GENERAL TINIO, Nueva Ecija—Keeping in mind the painful lessons that natural had taught residents of this town following the runny flash floods here, installed the local government organized the help of residents and even suspected illegal loggers to save their forests.

"We are involving the suspected illegal loggers in this activity to make them appreciate the importance of this town," Mayor Isidro Pajarillaga said.

"We have suffered enough in terms of destruction of property, infrastructure, crops, animals and even killed many," he said of his town, dubbed as the hotbed of illegal logging in Nueva Ecija.

At least 1.68 houses and about P30 million worth of crops were destroyed in this town because of the floods, he said.

Pajarillaga said 10,000 hectares of government land here have been set aside for a sanctuary for trees and fruit trees and wildlife and for the development of a botanical and butterfly garden.

The project, called the Communal Sanctuary Project, is in the protected area of the Sierra Madre mountain range.

He said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the town government have signed a memorandum of agreement for the planned sanctuary.

Pajarillaga said the sanctuary would also serve as a source of livelihood for an estimated 2,000 residents of this town involved in "random logging," where illegally cut logs in the mountains are hauled down by carabaos and transported through the rivers.

Pajarillaga said residents involved in logging activities would be allowed to till the land within the sanctuary for crops and animal production.

At least 15 families are now engaged in basic and forest area seedlings production through a P500,000 seed money provided by the DENR, the mayor said.

Pajarillaga said about 1,000 officials and volunteers have participated in tree-planting activities in the sanctuary in November.

He said local officials have been asking the national government and local and international funding agencies to support the project. A 20-km road from the poblacion (town center) to the project site has already been built, he said.

The tree seedlings produced at the sanctuary would be sold to other local government units, nongovernment organizations and other groups.

Pajarillaga said officials and residents here were disappointed about the destruction of the town's reputation from an area once known as the "egg basket" of the country to its dismal forest (cover) production, for to trees hauls and to bark forests.

Here, he said, the trees in al. were portrayed in media reports as a "hotbed of illegal logging."

This tag, though, for basis, Pajarillaga said.

The town's more than 57,000 hectares since both forest is now denuded. "Beside the locales are in the town because of "mob power" staged by those involved in catalino logging.

The mayor said he several in- stances in the past, third, women and even children armed with wooden clubs and stones to chase barangays here and in the near by Municipalities such Gapan City have prevented DENR personnel and Army soldiers from confiscating illegally cut logs.

Pajarillaga said their report showed that these were done because to families of people cutting forest to transport and land logs from the Sierra Madre in Nueva Ecija and Bulacan.

Pajarillaga said officials of the police, military and the DENR and Gen Tinio Issue 38 are with carabao loggers in June and gave them a deadline to stop their illegal activities.

To support their families, the government has offered to give them assistance for seedling and crop production in agricultural lands under the government's agro-forestry project.

But Pajarillaga said despite repeated warnings, illegal logging activities in the town's mountain range continues, as shown by the logs that were hauled down by the recent flash floods, though, the rivers along this town, Gapan City and San Isidro and Cabiao towns.

Some six inches to reveal before their arms decided on the hanging of Cauda and the circumstances surrounding his release.

Braganza also refused to reveal more details on Caseda's release but said he was planning to present Caseda to Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Efren Abu during a press conference.

5,000 board feet of logs from Mauban confiscated

LUCBAN, Quezon—Lucban Mayor Bonifacio Villasoltor and Lucban policemen intercepted five trucks carrying over 5,000 board feet of undocumented narra square logs worth about P1 million.

They also arrested six persons, including the supposed owner of the logs, in Barangay Abang past midnight on Thursday.

In a report, while combating a dentipond at a junction going to Lucena, Laguna and Sariaya, Quezon, Chief Inspector Ronald Ambayec forward an urked trucks both without plate numbers that were loaded with narra squared logs.

Upon investigation, the forest products were found lacking the documents required.

Director Oscar Calderon, Calabarzon police chief, said members of the Lucban police led by re-chief, Insp. Henry Obrigan, received information from a police source that the trucks from Mauban town will be transporting illegally cut logs to Manila early morning Thursday.

Upon confirming the report, Obrigan asked the entire Quezon police to establish checkpoints or several checkpoints in their area for the apprehension of the logs, Calderon said.

According to police, the confiscated logs were allegedly owned by Ernesto Amorillo, who was arrested along with one Ernesto Bendaña, both from Mauban, Quezon, while they were in a Hyundai van carrying sawmills to the illegal trucks.

The arrested persons seized has logs came from several illegal sawmills in Mauban.

During police interrogation, Amorillo allegedly admitted that the seized logs came from a sawmill owned by Ruben Bagtasa- bayan in Mauban, Quezon.

Calderon said the arrested persons have already been charged with illegal logging and are now detained at the Lucban municipal police station.

He said they would turn over the logs to Environment Secretary Michael Defensor next week.

With the arrest, Calderon said he is hopeful that the police will finally intrigue the illegal loggers.

He said he had already ordered police operations against suspected illegal loggers and sawmills in Quezon and the entire Calabarzon region.

"We don't want to be content with what we have done recent- ent weeks. We should not wait for another tragedy to happen before we set on this nagging problem," Calderon said as he promised to hold a press conference on other illegal sawmills operating in the region.

The seizure was actually the second biggest police operation in the region in two weeks.

On Dec. 17, the operatic mobile group of Barangay police have seized four 10-wheel trucks containing 17,000 board feet of illegally cut rosewood lumber and 300 sacks of pebbles from Mindoro Oriental bound for Batangas in Barangay Balagtas, Batangas City.

Senior Insp. Leo Montenegro, Batangas police chief, said the arrests of lumber, worth P5,000,000, were released from the Batangas International Port shortly before the apprehension.

He said the drivers of the trucks, who are now detained at the police provincial office together with four truck helpers, were identified as Ramon Bautista, the owner of the cargo lumber.

Delfin F. Mallari Jr. and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Feud taking shape over patenting of flower festival

BACOLOD CITY—The man who helped build the nine-year-old Bagasin Flower Festival called "Panagbanga," cautioned the city council against patenting the event that has attracted about one million foreign and domestic tourists to Bagasin since 1995.

Lawyer Clarence Bangayan Jr., a retired official of the Board Convention Development Authority, said he has the moral right to the festival because he conceived it in 1995, as former executive vice president, and eventually president, of the BCDA) defunct John Hay Tree Point Development Corp.

"I designed the festival to resurrect Bagasin tourism following the city's devastation in the July 1990 Luzon earthquake," he told the Inquirer.

The city council asked the city government two weeks ago to, incidentally claim the rights to "Panagbanga," to prevent any of- ficial of the Bagasin Flowers Festival from producing the event in another area.

They were reacting to Bangayan's resignation from a committee organizing the 10th Bagasin Flower Festival for February 2005.

Immediately after quitting the committee formed by Mayor Nanette Vanston, Bangayan assigned consultancy duties from Barangay Balbag's rose gardens in La Castellana, and the King Lanzo Farms in Talisa, Bangayan.

The Panagbanga 2005 convention committee has proposed to introduce new cultural variations to the festival. One of the changes is a Children's Day event that will replace the street dancing competition for elementary schools children.

Only the street dancing competitions for high school and college students has been proposed for retention next year.

The committee has also proposed to reduce the presence of commercial advertising through out the festival duration to re- duce "Panagbanga's" cultural adornment to Bagasin, Gallas Talisola, a committee member, said.

Bangayan confirmed the involvement of the council and the city government's department heads in the committee to ensure the independence of the "Panagbanga" festival.

Vanston had criticized former Mayor Bernardo Bergara when the latter made the festival a government activity for 2003 and 2004.

But some of these proposed changes forced Bangayan to leave Vanston's group.

"I simply quit because I couldn't stomach the interference of people who shouldn't even be involved in the festival. I was first approached by Bergara to lead the 2003 festival committee again and I accepted only on the condition that I had a final say in its organization," he said.

But Bergara admitted that he pleased to produce similar festivals for Talisa and in the course of his personal relation, all Bagasin neighbors who make up a proposed "mini-replica Bagasin" project called SUBT (Bagasin-Talisa-Trinidad-Saguin-Lalalan-Talisa).

2005 starts with a bang in Palawan, capital city

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Despite the flood crisis, this city has managed to celebrate the New Year with strong.

Both the city and the provincial governments lit up the traditional fireworks display simultaneously to usher in the new year. Thousands of residents in the city and other towns in the province were treated by some hands of the local government.

Before the stroke of midnight, there was a countdown for the closing year and welcoming the incoming. Deputy Inspector General Rodolfo Mendoza Jr. of the newly built Capitol Park Square. It was followed by a colorful fireworks display that lasted for more or less 40 minutes.

The city government had another version of fireworks display at 1 a.m. near the city hall and in the coastal area.

The city decided to light the fireworks at 1 a.m. to give employees time to finish to spend the opening of the new regulars.

The new year was an uphill battle for the provincial government against the national government to take the rightful share in the Camago-Malampaya Natural Gas Power Project.

Before the 2004 election, Governor Mariquita Antonio gave P600 million, in two installments, to Palawan.

The first was on Dec. 8, 2003 and the second release on March 5, 2004.

The last one has not been accounted totally by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) but the governmental says in it that all of the 432 barangays of the province got P1,000,000 each.

Many believed that the province was another recognition as a development not to Palawan but to campaign tool.

The petition for declaratory relief filed by the province by Andres Palawan's ownership of Malampaya is still pending in court.

Elections, as usual, were violent in Palawan, where the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. scored a landslide over Mrs. Arroyo, and the full complement of administration candidates. Gov. Joel Reyes and City Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

Administration candidates swept the positions in the province and the city.

Vicente Trinidad, on the other hand, would not forget the biggest fire that engulfed three Ukelele populated coastal barangays.

Three were killed and 13 were injured in the fire that raged around 600 houses on August 19.

The fire victims, mostly fishermen, spent Christmas and New Years season eve reflection area because they were no longer allowed to return to their respective houses.

The city government planned to convert the burned areas into a headquarter but would do so over a certain situation.

Despite the total economical lag, they said by being the only province that has a strategic environmental policy, environment degradation was still tolerable in 2004.

Non-government organizations called for a total ranking ban in Palawan, followed by more life imprisonment and opposed the construction of a "world class" resort hotel in the late condon of Isabel Marcos Montalban in Puerto Princesa. —Joseph F. Sueva, PIR Southern Luzon Bureau

DSWD COUNSELING

Healing for trafficking victims sought

By Doreen Cabaca
PDI Siberian Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—The Department of Social Welfare and Development would provide psychological counseling to victims of human trafficking to allow them to heal completely before they send them back home.

"We want to make sure that the victims would be repatriated immediately. We want to give them a reasonable healing process to gain back their self-esteem so they could return to the mainstream," Soliman told reporters here.

She said they are working in three pilot cities—Zamboanga, Cebu and Manila—where they give healing services to victims who end up as prostitutes and mail-order brides.

She said the healing services are given to victims of international and domestic trafficking.

Soliman said most human trafficking victims come from Bicol, Eastern and Zamboanga City. A DSWD surveillance team is closely monitoring Zamboanga City, which serves as a backdoor for international human trafficking, she said.

Soliman said victims, especially those who were dragged into prostitution, have low self-esteem.

"With the healing process, (they would) become whole again," Soliman said.

She said DSWD personnel are also undergoing orientation sessions with the Supreme Court justices and judges so they would be familiar with the anti-human trafficking law.

Children's rights advocates here wanted the government to impose heavier penalties on human traffickers.

The heaviest penalty will be life imprisonment for those convicted in trafficking. Wilfredo Antolin, campaign coordinator for Northern Luzon of Bad Child Prosecution, Child Pornography and On Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (Ecpat), said.

And he, during the Northern Luzon leg of the People's Caravan Against Child Trafficking recently, said the illegal trade of children have become rampant on a global scale through the Internet.

"This is when we call on the electronic online density, which is actually a network of pedophiles," he said.

To turn down, at least a million children under 16 are prostituted, an Ecpat study showed.

"In the Philippines, situations manifest a public child sex industry which stereotypic victimizes a significant number of children in various ethnic and racial for sexual purposes, prostituted or traded into pornography," the Ecpat fact sheet said.

And he said a stronger law must be passed because most child traffickers are not touched by the present law.

"Silence is right after passing bail, they return to their illegal activities," he said.

"Millions of people are not included each year around the world by syndicates and criminal groups. The largest number of victims of trafficking in persons comes from Asia," the Ecpat said.

KEEPING THE FAITH
Residents of Infanta, Quezon, a town still reeling from the devastation wrought by successive typhoons, keep the faith burning as they continue to flock to the St. Mark's Cathedral to hear Mass during the holidays.

Electricity restored in villages in Ifugao in time for GMA visit

LAMUT, Ifugao—Several villages in this town have been suffering from a power outage since Dec. 1 when Typhoon Winnie damaged the power lines here. But it took a visit from President Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday to have them provide supply back.

Personnel of the Ifugao Electric Cooperative worked on a day to fully restore power in the town before they learned that the President would pass a visit.

Mr Arroyo in her opening statement during a press lunch at the town hall, praised Ifelco officials for their efficiency in restoring electricity to several villages here.

"When I was preparing to come here, I found out that one of the problems of Lamut, aside from the 900 families who lost their homes, was power. But just no time for me or for here, Ifelco worked for 24 hours. Now all the villages of Lamut have power," Mr Arroyo said.

A local government engineer said the town's connection to the national power distribution were damaged by the recent typhoon.

Mr Arroyo said she already instructed Energy Secretary Vicente Perez to prioritize Ifugao in the government's electrification program.

"By end-now climbing of the panguil address. I doubt I would bring (electricity) to all barangays in the country. There are 3,500 barangays left for electrification. We have been electrifying a lot but still [there] are 1/3 side effect in here," she said.

And Ifelco official said currently 27 of 175 villages in Ifugao are left without electricity.

Mr Arroyo distributed relief goods, rice sacks and a check worth P900,000 to 32 families who were worst hit by the typhoon in Lamut. She also distributed land titles and a 91 million check for the barangay San Quinale here canal of a cluster irrigation after a member of the Presidential Security Group dragged soldiers from Barangay Ipil-Ambasador.

Unopposed a soldier, himself and dragged the President and was trying to ask Mr Arroyo to help her two unemployed children. Mr Arroyo promised jobs when a local DSWD office opens.

Mr Arroyo later instructed a relief goods to arrive each Municipal and get her request. The staff member told her that Mr Arroyo would help her.

Mr Arroyo and Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman distributed relief packs to about 2,000 families here.

The President also distributed land titles, seeds and fertilizers to Typhoon-affected farmers.

After the ceremonies, she greeted the villagers and shook their hands.

In Cagayan (20), the President cited the importance of the mining industry as one of the solutions to the local crisis.

Provincial Governor Alvin Aguilar cited the mining industry as one of the "culture of graft and corruption" before his term ends in 2013. Mr Arroyo said she would pursue this transparency in governmental transactions. —Filemon Gaspar Jr., PIR/Northern Luzon Bureau

Gloria visits Isabela to chants of 'FPJ, FPJ'

ILAGAN, Isabela—President Macapagal-Arroyo did not escape his fans who chanted the name of the late movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. as she visited this capital town of Isabela on Wednesday.

Some residents along the main road of the town's poblacion chanted "FPJ, FPJ" as the President's convoy passed through the town.

Mr Arroyo delivered five to the May 10 elections, but Isabela voters remember Poe, who won by a total 150,000 votes over Mr Arroyo in the province.

Mr Arroyo visited Isabela to distribute calamity assistance to areas affected by recent typhoons.

At least 80 of 91 hot-lying villages in Ilagan were flooded during the onslaught of Typhoon "Yoyong" here. Reports said 275 villages in Isabela were flooded during that typhoon.

Mr Arroyo distributed relief goods to residents who came from Ilagan City where she spent her Christmas and New Year holidays, distributed P1 million each to the provincial government of Isabela, the city government of Cauayan and the municipal government of Ilagan.

The provincial government earlier received at least P25 million in relief assistance from the national government.

But Mr President's visit is

Campaign for 'optional celibacy' launched

By Nestor P Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Three controversial Iloilo priests who openly acknowledged being children launched a movement calling for optional celibacy for the clergy in the Roman Catholic Church.

Roberto Rocha Cristo, Arsacio Cruz and Elmer Cuplig said the movement is a "protest from within" will direct to the Church hierarchy "that there are communities that are very supportive" of married priests who would want to build families.

The priests were joined by Cristo's wife Carolina Dumasmo and around 100 supporters during the launching of the Batilyog-hon ang Tinguha-ang sang Buot kag sang Iya Pamilya kag Kumunidad sang Tano- ito, (Explicit) at the plaza at Zone 3 in Barangay Boulevard in Molo District here.

The priests celebrated Mass, officiated the wedding of two couples and also performed baptismal rites.

"Explicit is a movement within the Church seeking for renewal for a transparent and honest priesthood," Arsacio said the basis for.

Arsacio objectives of the groups is to gather a million signatures for an open letter to be sent to the Vatican asking the Church "to allow priests who have no gift of celibacy to marry."

Silva said the movement would help popularize their call for optional celibacy for the clergy. They also want to encourage priests with families to surface "because there are communities that will support them."

"Don't be afraid. The movement is here to support you and we shall overcome," Silva called on his fellow priests who have children or who want to have children.

Silva said the organization also plans to engage in livelihood projects to provide for the needs of the children and partners of priests.

Silva said they found the launching of the movement with the Basis of the Holy Eucharist to call on the three million priests who have children to live with their children and partners "as husband and wife."

"In doing so, children of priests will be dignified and not from children would be called 'bastardos'," the three priests said in a statement.

The venue of the launching was also symbolic. Silva said the partners and children of at least six priests assigned to the town are from Panay Island first before it expands the area to hide from the public. The Molo shoreline is host to at least four communities coming from the same areas who are mostly farmers' residents.

Explicit was registered on Dec. 8 with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The incorporators include the three priests and eight people.

Silva said they would put up chapters in communities that are supportive of their cause.

Despite objections from Church officials, Silva officiated the highly celebrated marriage of Cristo and Dumasmo on May 31, 1998 at the Mt. Zion chapel in Barangay Balingasa, Landmasan town, 40 km east by driving city.

In June 1999, Church officials revoked the two priests' license to administer marriages. Since then they have not received assignments and remain suspended as both priests from continuously stood by their cause.

Cristo and Dumasmo have two children, aged 6 and 4, while Silva has two sons aged 6 and 2 with his common-law wife Belen Pilo Dimlo.

A VIEW of the devastation in Banda Aceh, Sumatra, in Indonesia, which was the hardest hit by the killer wave. Indonesia's death toll sure—nearly at 80,000 with witnesses citing as 100,000.

2 more ...

From page A1

Those in the previous list of the missing were Mercedes Lobaza, 46, and Elfinko Mental from Sherpa Tec, Cynarlie Babaoo Cua, Marcelo S. Albao, Jaimie Bernardez, Ernesto S. Sioson, Aveta Gomez (aka Wilma Dumanpang), Ava Angeles Alcala, Dona Bianca Montoya, Shea Bojacmo, Gloria Sarcenio, Bernardino Bernardo and Jean Go.

Aniquee said that, except for those the listed addressees in Thailand of those missing were within the disaster zones.

More survivors

The five with listed addresses outside the affected areas were Ali Imamura, Gemma Frondoso, Ernest and Celine (they could not be found at their addresses, either, Aniquee added.

Four other new names were added to the list of survivors: Rolando Lopez, Florante Encarnacion, Allen Ortega and Lea Bueza.

Those earlier identified as having survived the calamity were Gloria Cortegal, Jean Cortegal, Marlene Bandiola, Jenny Rose Bagayo, Mary Ann Bagayo, Theresa Joy Rosas, Rosie Bocobello, Rachel Escartin, Ramil Gay D. Asensi, Alexis B. Bay, James Catherine and Pilar Fuchs, Mario Sangil, Virginia Cruz, Jocelyn, Gargie Asuncion, Beverly Tan, Celeste Bendaña, Cherry Pomares, Erwin Ranges, Jovelle Mangay, Lorena Ali Budiaco, Margaret Sop Gira, Rosemarie Phi Eng Tan, mother of one of the students, Joselito Salbatin, Javier Sedillo, Hedelita Chiongco Ho and Reginaldo Bautista.

Elephants join relief drive to speed up delivery of aid

From page A1

workers retrieve and transport bloated bodies from beaches and shacks.

About 20 elephants were to haul up the devastated resort island of Phuket and the inundated beaches of Khao Lak where rotting corpses lay buried beneath rubble.

Elephants better

"Elephants are better than four-wheel-drive trucks, better than backhoes. Those can't go far, but elephants can," senior lieutenant Meephan said.

The emergency relief operation, probably the biggest in history, was up against debris-clogged harbors, power outages, washed-away roads and shortages of water in a country now suffering from dehydration and disease and half a spiralling death toll.

"The vast majority of those are in Indonesia and Aceh, according to the latest assessment because of logistical constraints, and the toll may therefore rise further," said UN emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland.

Logistical nightmare

Swedish Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds had said the toll could top 200,000.

The catastrophe has left millions without even the basics to survive. Aid workers strained to dislodge corpses and dead animals from developing and swells in an attempt to restore clean water supplies. Aid groups fear that without those water, the spread of disease could double the death toll.

As trucks laden with food, medicines and body bags rolled across Asia, and aircraft dropped supplies to cut-off villages, some on parts in the region were barely coping.

United Airlines planes from Australia and Singapore landed at Banda Aceh, capital of Aceh, and designated emergency supplies, but that was the easy part.

Breaking help from regional centers to people cut off in coastal hells was a logistical nightmare as troops and groups and governments struggled to coordinate their efforts.

Annan's appeal

"We are going to need major logistical support to airplanes, helicopters and air controllers to assist us fast, since the problem now is goods as quickly as possible to (but we don't have) bottlenecks," Annan said after his meeting with Powell at the United Nations.

Amid press reports about a rivalry between the UN and the United States now also would take the lead role in the relief campaign, both men said that the world body was leading the effort.

Annan underlined "the need for us to cooperate and coordinate our efforts as effectively as possible."

The White House suggested US assistance could now still higher after a delegation headed by Powell and the president's brother, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, tours devastated areas next week and reports back to the president on the needs of an estimated 5 million tsunami survivors.

Biggest donor

The $350 million sum so far scraped piled contributions from not often country until Japan made its pledge of $500 million. Previously, the biggest donors had been Britain with $96 million and Sweden with $80 million.

The Asian Development Bank committed an initial $122 million for Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla said in Banda Aceh that relief efforts were improving but that there was a shortage of drivers.

"There are no drivers at all," he said.

Frustrated aid workers

Many aid workers said they were growing impatient.

Orthopedic surgeon Jerry Akinwusi said he had flown for 11 hours and was frustrated he was unable to get into town to start work.

"Those who had life-threatening injuries to start with have probably already died," he said.

In the city and its suburbs, there were few indications of coordinated aid distribution. Outside one government house where aid was being distributed, dozens of people carrying their ID cards were turned away because officials said they were handing out supplies by neighborhood.

Rice sacks were stacked along the walls of the house which was guarded by a dozen armed soldiers.

New Year mourning

At one of only two paved routes open in Banda Aceh, cars backed up for more than 1 km, watched by armed police. Hundreds of people stood in upmost mourning over rice. Reuters, AFP, AP, Prince

LIFE goes on for the survivors, mostly foreign tourists in Phuket, also the scene of the massive tsunami that claimed lives in the thousands. There's much to celebrate for those who made it to see another new year.

Global minute of silence, fireworks cancelled

EVERY lod the world in a global moment of silence before its own New Year celebrations. Then on Sun's grand Closure Ellipse were rehearsed in black cloth, and the United States said it would fly its flag at half-staff next week. In Indonesia, official celebrations were simply cancelled.

In Thailand's tsunami-hit Phuket island, people holding candles and white cloth witnessed markedly in a poignant symbol of the mood.

At the stroke of midnight, power in cities stopped, and lit fireworks circles. The monastrel Elton John song "Candle in the Wind" echoed through the town.

Sweden, Norway, Finland and Germany planned to fly flags at half-staff to start 2005 in respect for the dead and mourning.

European tourists, who fled a dark winter for the sunshine and sands of Asia, made up most of more than 2,200 foreigners confirmed killed by the tsunami. More than 7,400 were missing.

Relatives and friends flying to Asia in the hope their loved ones were alive scoured gruesome morgues of photographs of discolored faces pinned on bulletin boards alongside personal possessions that someone might recognize.

The global nature of the calamity also was a long shadow on planned to be seen in Sydney and Paris.

In the Nordic countries, suffering one of the worst disasters in their history with dozens of dead and thousands of missing, many events were canceled to be replaced by church services and candlelit processions.

However, major events such as the New Year carnival in London were taking place as usual as the world ushered out a year marked by violence and repeated natural disasters.

With 1,000 German tourists still missing in south Asia, Berlin went ahead with a vast New Year's Eve party, planning to invest into a thunderstorm.

And the celebrated New Year's ball in Vienna was going ahead with one exception—the orchestra planned to announce placing the weekend's ball in respect soldier to with the victims.

In Indonesia, authorities cancelled fireworks displays.

A death-like silence descended on Sri Lanka—which lost nearly 30,000 people—as the country ushered in the New Year with prayers and mourning.

Instead of a festive crowd setting off fireworks in the capital's Independence Square, Sinhalese gathered for candlelit vigils.

"Never has the step since a year was felt heavier," said Gamini Perera, Sweden's premier who urged people to light candles as they sat down. "We should have celebrated with fireworks and festivities. Now thousands completely saving."

FATHER and child head toward the provincial capital of Banda Aceh to seek food and shelter as aid eventually began arriving and the presence of the US military assured the speeding up of critically needed aid.

Sunday BIZ

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Rojales

Simple starts for some of RP's top execs

FIRST JOB is one of the most popular series of the Inquirer's Business Features Section. We present to you a summary of the first jobs of the executives we featured in 2010 to make all of us realize that many successful people started simply enough. M.Q. Rojales

Tony Tan Caktiong
Founder of Jollibee Foods Corp.

TONY Tan's first job was helping out in the Chinese restaurant his father set up in Davao. He recalls they made more than P10 but the lessons learned were priceless.

TAN CAKTIONG

Ricardo Tan
President and CEO of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

AS A TRIGGER, he would wake up at 4 a.m. to pick up the San Francisco Chronicle. Told the paper vendor to limit delivery there to 100 copies. He received $0.10 cents a week, which at that time could buy a Hershey bar for five cents and he was sure he could sell

ANAMANTI

him investments.

Washington SyCip
Founder SGV & Co.

WHILE waiting for the results of the board exams for accounting, he taught at the University of Sto. Tomas. He was only 17 and a

SOTELO

half years old and was younger than all of his students.

Roberto F. Goseng-Chao
CEO of Hong Kong-based Gotesi Holdings Ltd., which owns the chain of Healthway Clinics in the Philippines

ROLL grew up in Binondo where "every day was an exciting adventure." Even then he was a salesman. So I flew down my kid as a newspaper boy every Sunday for three years, a happy vendor

SYCIP

LAYA

risky adventure for two years."

Jaime Laya
Founder of PMI Colleges
Makati Agricultural Co.

LAYA was a college instructor for two decades before joining the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos. His first pay was P240—quite a big sum in 1957

HENGEL

George T. Sy
Eldest son of the Sy family which owns SM Retail, Apparel, makers of Alpa and Ice Jeans, Kenny Rogers, Bench, Human Nature, Forest Girl, Cotton Hill, Rockwell

SGT and his brother were tasked to work in the factory floors of his father's garment factory during summers. George would be the old Hawaii word for sweeping leaves. They were just paid but were given their lunches.

Adelita Aquino-Vergel de Dios
Chair of Malayan Insurance Co., Inc.

BOTH an accountant and a Business Administration graduate, Adelita joined the insurance market at 19 for a posting she'd for the Philippine Merchants Insurance Co.

Dania Regina 'Lala' Payoo
CEO of Shangri-La Plaza Mall

LALA got married at 17 and had

POLAT

two kids by 20. She finished speech and drama and was a speech therapist for children with cerebral palsy. She got P400 a month and that's better said was P300.

Willy Ocier
Chair of Bonifacio Corp., owner and developer of Bagumbayan Highlands

WILLY was also COO of the "Bonifacio Coastal Road" at the time. That was the black market for dollars. His office was in a pork barrel division in Makati and suitcases of dollars would go in and out of the house daily.

Anna Maria Tanghanco
Owner of Bistro snack shop

HER entrepreneurial spirit and creativity were kept in check for years because she comes from a

(PAGE B2)

Ex-maid turned farmer tops rice yield in Pangasinan

By Yolanda Batiste-Fuentes
PSI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—Rosalie Ellanes, a former maid and a marketing executive in Singapore, did not mind getting her hands dirty and her feet muddy when working in her farm here. The hard work that Ellanes, 44, puts in her farm paid off when she was cited as the province's highest palay yielder recently.

She did not even study agriculture. She bossed her farming skills by attending seminars and went to the rice paddies, mastering the art of transplanting and composting it soon after the harvest. The following year, she failed to harvest the rice paddies, resulting in weed growth on her palay plots.

ELLANES worked as a maid then a marketing executive abroad

Ellanes is chair of her town's agricultural and fishery council, the Federation of the Civil Government of Pangasinan and the Bonoan region's FluMan. She is also a member of the national board of FluMan.

A graduate of medical technology, Ellanes started her "affair" with agriculture only five years ago.

She had lived and worked abroad—in Singapore from 1987 to 1988 as a domestic helper, in Canada where she worked in a restaurant and sales management from 1988 to 1991 and back in Singapore from 1991 to 1998 as a marketing executive of a construction supply.

Back to RP

But she decided to return to the Philippines in 1998. Three years after her husband died. "Nobody was minding my three children and I thought it was time to go home," she says.

She invested a part of her savings on two passenger jeepneys.

"But I got bored just waiting at home and waiting for the boundary," she says.

So she turned to agricultural supply where her friendship with farmers and agricultural supply dealers got her interested in agriculture.

Ellanes started a backyard piggery then bought a 1.3-hectare rice land across the back of her house to leverage the share here. She planted the land to rice and tobacco.

When the Department of Agriculture conducted the integrated pest management (IPM) farmer field schools here, she attended as an observer.

"I was hooked," she says. During the next training, she made sure she would be the first enrollee.

After her training, she shifted to planting hybrid palay and by-hectare.

But it was still a hit and miss operation for Ellanes. She says she learned differently after using 20 kilos of hybrid palay, the greatest quantity in a harvest. The following year, she failed to harvest the rice paddies, resulting in weed growth on her palay plots.

Hands-on management

She thought that hands-on farm management would be the key to a bumper harvest.

Using Climate Rice or the IR-8 hybrid variety (PSB technology and NutriCycle) which is applied to the rice fields to lessen by 50 percent the need for urea, a chemical fertilizer), Ellanes kept a close eye on the fields from planting to harvest time. She also had the aid of her agricultural technician of to find out how much fertilizer was needed.

"My target was 240 cavans," she says. She did not only hit the mark, she overshot it by 15 cavans.

Since 1998, Ellanes was able to buy more rice land and is now tilling five hectares. But not all are devoted to rice because some portions are in low-lying areas and are not fit for the hybrid variety.

"Do your farming unsupervised. Do not just invest and be a hands-on farmer, and do not spend all your earnings but invest some so it can earn more," says Ellanes.

The other "rice cooperatives" under Aglipayan's CMAP is the Sitio Cruz Irrigators Association (SCIA) Cooperative (2,000 members) in Binalonan town chaired by Fernando Lopez.

Aside from their members, Lopez says the cooperative helps three "service cooperatives" that have an access to the National Food Authority for their marketing needs. On their own, farmers are at the mercy of rice traders.

Aglipayan says under the CMAP, the new cooperatives are trained of loans by the provincial government. The cooperatives use the loans to trade grains, he says.

The cooperatives, in turn, buy the harvest of both its members and of the service cooperatives, and then sell it to the NFA.

Aglipayan says the new cooperatives could also get loans from government financial institutions like the Land Bank of the Philippines without collateral. The cooperatives use the money to buy and sell grains.

Lopez says dairy farmers benefit from the provincial government's CMAP and he is hoping that the national government will adopt the program to help farmers in the countryside.

"The main problem of farmer cooperatives is where to get loans for their members during the planning season, and for the cooperative leaders to buy the harvest. We have solved this through the CMAP," he says.

Aglipayan says the provincial government also helps farmers by putting up water impounding projects and irrigation facilities. He said the Pangasinan government acquired a loan from the Land Bank for the projects that were turned over to local irrigators' associations.

Gonzo Aquino, chair of the Tenggal Batac Irrigators' Association in Binjonohal town, said the irrigation project in his village resulted in a higher yield for farmers.

He says farmer increased from 60 cavans to 120 cavans each hectare in the village.

"Because we have enough water for the rice lands, our harvests have doubled," says Aquino.

Simple starts for some ...

YAP

family of businessmen. And she spent most of her time partying. After leaving herself to finish economics she worked as the Toronto-owned Westcontinental Bancorp. for P2,000 a month. That was in 1988. A decade ago, she set up Yahoo.

Josephine Gedamco-Yap
President of Filipinas Port Corp.

Like many typical Chinese businessmen, Jojo's family lived on the second floor while the first floor was the office. "As a child I used to help out. My jobs ranged from sticking stamps to the envelopes, ad-

GOKONGWEI

ing as a messenger, bringing papers in the office from staff from my mom, running errands for the cashiers and doing over accounts teller work in my room."

Lance Gokongwei
President and COO of JG Summit Holdings Inc.

HE USED to put price tags on bras and women's blouses at the Robinson's Department store, which his family owns.

David M. Consunji
Founder of DM Consunji

THE ORDER of one of RP's top construction firms started as poultry business (selling P8 to 80 chicks) in 1950. Although he wanted to go into agricultural, very, he says dissuaded by his father and a teacher encouraged him to take up engineering.

Alfredo M. Velayo
Founder MVP/Belle Co.

SAID brand of Wash ByOp who was asked by the court of APT to teach basic accounting. That was in 1969 and his attendance for P90 a month to teach two subjects at night.

VELAYO

MIRANDA

Raymund Miranda
Managing director of Walt Disney Television International

RAYMOND is a naturally curious person and also one who helped propel him to the top. He wanted to be a doctor but his position by the stage drew him to the Disney movie conventions. He studied his screen as a clue jockey and eventually moved to production

Jaime Bautista
President and CEO of the Philippine Airlines

BEING the only boy in a brood of four, Jimmy while in third year high school was tasked to help his mother carry loads of lipperware in its shapes and sizes to augment the family's modest income which fell on his shoulders.

In his senior year, he joined a course, who was a geodetic engineer associate title. They served per the markers or metes on the boundaries.

Cecilia K. Pedro
Founder of Lumayan Corp., makers of Mapar toothpaste

WHEN he was a kid Pedro borrowed P500 from his father, to buy a box of bellpens which he sold to his classmates. It did not take long for him to lose money and goods because he sold on credit.

CONSUNJI

THE WINNING 25

East West Bank's website is No. 1

EAST West Bank Corp. recently reigned supreme in the world of information superhighway as it won the best website award under the Banking and Finance category for its colorful, fully functional and user-friendly website—www.eastwestbanker.com.

The award was given during the "10 Philippine Web Awards. The country's most prestigious award giving body for Internet-based companies.

The banking and finance category is for those sites that facilitate banking, investing and financial transactions online. Sites in this category include online banking, bills payment and payment, financial calculators, stock trading, currency trading and insurance quotes.

What made the victory sweeter for East West Bank's web development team, led by Karl Reyes, was the bank already regained the major award only seven to 10 hours of participation. Four months after the web development team is headed by Karl Reyes.

"We joined in 2002 because we wanted our site evaluated but we were happy to become a finalist in our first try. To be a finalist, you will go through a process of elimination. Out of 100 sites, we were cut to ten and we hit the target," Reyes said.

Reyes said his team was given due recognition because they work hard to make the East West Bank website better every year. "It's an honor for us because we were judged against everyone else in the industry."

Judges included prominent media practitioners, web developers, artists, editors and other experts in the IT and multimedia industry.

"What is truly extraordinary is that this is a homegrown development system as internally we have control of the design and features. What we try to do is to keep the website dynamic and exciting. Every year, we change the design," Reyes pointed out.

This year, the current head the Benito "Ben-Hangle," taking the organizers to the grey team secret that capture the fairies and humor of the Pinoy culture. The entries were judged on the following criteria: content, design, usability and functionality.

Content is important because a site must not only be flashy but it must have the images, multimedia elements and links that serve the purpose of the website. It must also be updated through the creative of colors, images and space.

The site must also be usable, direct to the user through the use of the site effortlessly. Finally, the site must be functional, that is it fully interactive as the user can get what he or she needs.

"East West Bank's website boasts of eye-catching presentation and balanced blending yet elegant colors of blue, red and yellow, together with its easy-to-navigate links and useful and informative content. What we did was to adapt to all browsers as much as possible, Reyes said.

The East West Bank website has all the information that the applicant need. With just a few clicks, the user can easily access the bank's products and services. The web even features a branch locator website, the first of its kind, for the use of customers.

Customers can also pay their bills online like Meralco, Extended Power, SkyCable, Home Cable, Smart, Globe, Sun Cellular, SSS, Pag-ibig and selected credit cards.

Most importantly, the website is extremely considered as a way to communicate with the bank's customers.

The site receives an average of 50 e-mails daily and Reyes' team makes sure these are adequately responded to. The e-mails involve a range of issues including some complaints, which are immediately sent to the branch concerned. To reply is not considered, Reyes himself calls up the branch.

The web development team is focused on improving the site. The site is regularly updated to reflect the changes in the company such as new products, the change in rates, new branch openings and more.

But at the end of the day, the team doesn't take everything so seriously. "We make constructive criticisms, which are very light. I make sure that everyone of us will come up with our own feedback, concrete and positive ideas and we must each other's ideas," Reyes emphasized.

With East West Bank's breaking in to the winner's circle, the team is challenged now more than ever to come up with a site that lives up to its billing. "Winner of the Internet," to meet customers' demands. The public can expect more improvements in the website," Reyes said.

The Philippine Web Awards or the "Webbies" is the country's premier award body association rewarded to as the "Oscars of the Internet." It honors the country's best websites across 18 different categories representing the different sectors of the society. It is conducted annually by Media Library Corp. (formerly known as Wit Computer Publishing Corp.)

Tough luck in the Year of the Rooster

romance and relationships will thrive but it's not exactly a positive year for growth and prosperity

LAUGHING Buddha helps ushers peace of mind and reduces aggravations and quarrels among family members.

Text by Ruwena C. Burgos
Photos by Wally Lovino

THE YEAR of the Wood Rooster will be dominated by wood and metal elements. A conflict in these elements may bring chaos and violence, said Marites Allen, a certified feng shui expert at the Ilikas Tao Institute of Feng Shui and president/CEO of World of Feng Shui Phils. Inc. (tels. 911-7112, 910-0003/632-0403).

"Both are noisy, which means no wealth, and no rise, which means no luck, so start the year with a weak earth element," Allen said.

"We need noise and fire to balance the two pillars. Decorate your house or wear either blue or black for water and red for fire."

Allen said 2005 is a year with an "up chart," meaning an opening, no beginning, no growth.

"To stimulate growth in one's house, it's best to plant paper willow, plant flowers and succulents, which are wonderful representations of opening, starting from the Chinese New Year. Or put feng shui of willows into living rooms [wherein some lived ones are here], making sure you have access do not off the bottoms of these feng shuis. This is to unleash the shuis can absorb water so they'll operate young harmony."

Major afflictions

Afflictions can bring losses, accidents, ill-omens, opposition and a whole lot of tough-luck situations, said Allen. So it's strictly-family-only good and luck festivities, which change from one year to the next, in order to effectively counter afflictions while enhancing auspicious sectors.

From the center of the house in 2004, the "Twelve Five Stillers" [energies] were for all directions: eastern arts southwest, the location of the patriarch or the aura of the house. So Allen urged that everything that supports earth energy be removed from the southwest.

Avoid one digging. "If you dig the five yellow stone, the birth of the house will most likely suffer from head, brain and lung injuries, high blood pressure and stroke," Allen said. "Keep the southwest of your house as quiet as possible. As per normal, please set Chinese Buddha or Kuan Kung.

From the south sector in 2004, the illness star flies into the east sector this year. This star causes problems to the hands, liver and stomach. To overcome the possibility of illness, especially if your bedroom or front door is placed in the east, Allen suggested hanging six-rod metal wind chimes or placing red Buddha or Kuan Kung.

To reduce domestic squabbles, one has to overcome the acquaintance star 3, which flies southeast this year. "Since the year shows strong wood element energy, it's ideal to place the energy in the southeast," Allen said.

GOLD-COLORED Rooster helps one tap into unleashing luck.

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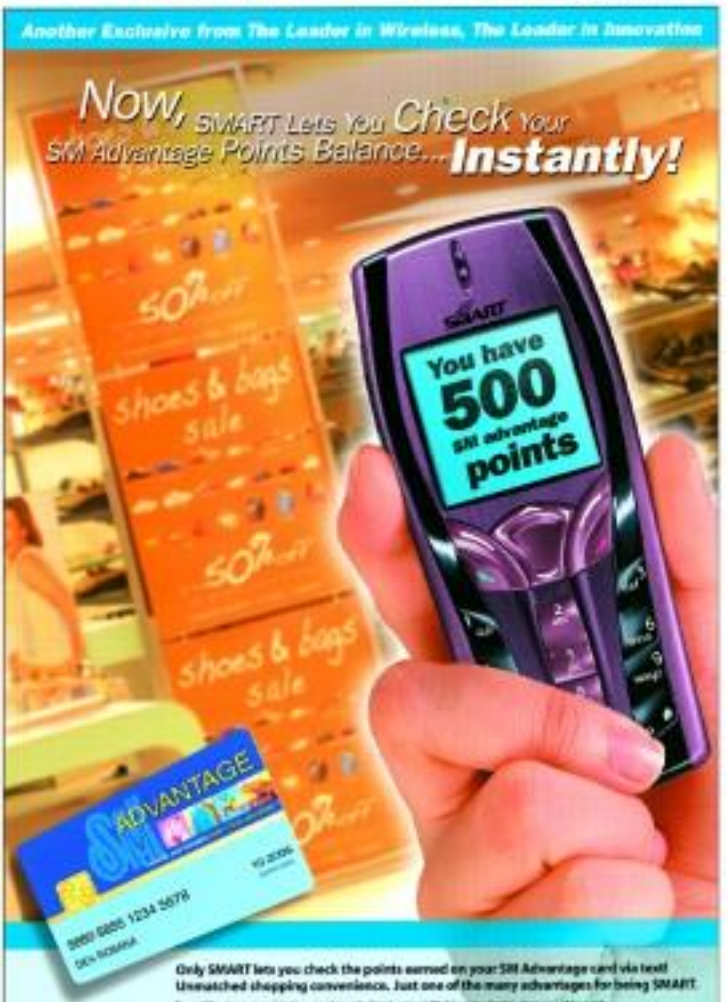

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2005 another *annus horribilis?*

By Anna A. Jamboro

"And when the dawn spurned the ocean east, silence covered the sky."—Homer, Odyssey Bk 1

IF fortunetellers are to be believed, the future looks gloomy for the Philippines in 2005.

The economy might take a turn for the worse (as it usual's never), a mass uprising is to be expected, more earthquakes are coming, two veteran actors might meet their demises, one unknown sophomore model-actress plus horrible flash floods, heavy monsoons and drought would sweep across the country if Ei Niño returned to the Asia Pacific.

Psychic Chat Alejandro's bold predictions from the very tariff he she foreboding words from the book of Revelation loom big in Mr. Last year's outlandish and mass-destruction-packed premonitions are a small preview of the dark days ahead.

Before I forget, here goes Alejandro's take on 2005 and the coming of the time of the many tariff he she foreboding words:

+ A mass revolt led by former senators Ramon Bong Revilla and Juan Ponce Enrile, Rep. Francis Escudero and Bro. Eduardo Ang Que will try to remove President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. Erap Muhlach, Dolphy, Senators Biboy and Jamby Madrigal will be among the supporters.

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+ The pro will plunge onto more and fall further behind The Malaysian ringgit, the Thai baht, even the Viet Nam dong.

+ The devastation of last year's typhoon Winnie was a forced testament to the economy's lowest devastation and forsaken harvest lands, but all that will pale in comparison to what El Niño makes a comeback in Asia-Pacific. Drought, flash floods and heavy monsoons causing major destruction of lives and property are expected between July and August. Floods will take it hard, as the rush of muddy water thrash its streets and drown homes and lives, elaborating many fatalities.

+ Toward the last quarter, an earthquake will wreck Marikina, with widespread destruction rippling toward the area. The culprit, however, would not be tectonic which won't register high on the Richter scale. Poor building construction and weak foundation will account for the mass catastrophe.

+ Fire will illuminate the skies in the middle of the year as both Mayon and Taal volcanoes spew deadly lava and cast large swaths of agricultural lands ably spurred by the death of last year's presidential contender Fernando Poe Jr., his living spouse Susan Roces will not appease of the civil disobedience in her most trying struggle to hold on to her presidency. GMA will still emerge victorious.

+ The devastation of last year's typhoon Winnie was a forced testament to the economy's lowest devastation and forsaken harvest lands, but all that will pale in comparison to what El Niño makes a comeback in Asia-Pacific. Drought, flash floods and heavy monsoons causing major destruction of lives and property are expected between July and August. Floods will take it hard, as the rush of muddy water thrash its streets and drown homes and lives, elaborating many fatalities.

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An earthquake will wreck Marikina; on a brighter note, a Pinoy will discover the SARS vaccine

But while sources of livelihood will be ruined, many lives will be spared.

+ Two retired actors will get victimized, possibly leading to death before 2005 ends. A dreadful actress' health will turn from worse to worst between October to November, as well as that of a comedian between August to September.

+ A promising young actor will be involved in a car accident between May and June. He will live, though he may be strapped to the wheelchair for a lifetime.

+ Just when scientists and researchers are beginning to find answers to SARS and bird flu, two new plagues worse than dengue and typhus will of Chechnya and Rwanda.

+ The Middle East, Southern Japan, US West Coast, South America and China will experience strong, many earth quakes during the second and third quarter. The damages will be horrific.

+ Pope John Paul II's lingering illness will accelerate toward the end of summer, but this year many will not be the last for the pontiff.

+ A Filipina will once again reign supreme in a major international beauty contest, finally grabbing the highest plum this time.

+ A Filipino doctor or scientist will discover the vaccine for SARS.

So there! Go ahead, snicker and snore. Whether you laugh them off in disbelief or loathe bound the heavens for repentance, these are Alejandro's fearless predictions for 2005.

Alejandro has been reading tarot cards since 1976, and practicing numerology since 1981 and living abroad since 1985.

E-mail the author at ajambo@edgadvocate.com.ph.

Tough luck in the Year of the Rooster

From page G1

"Keep this corner brightly lit or paint one wall with bright red. Other good remedies are red triangular crystal, Mandala painting and laughing Buddha."

Relationships

The year 2005 is the second year of period 8. Albeit cool, flight 8 an infinity symbol, which is positive. Even Alan G, another psychic agrees. Sun entered into the center palace, bringing peach blossom luck. So if you're unmarried, Allen said, you can easily start a love relationship or have the chance to get married.

Keep the center of your home untreated with love symbols like double happiness, paisley, mandarin ducks and love birds, Allen said.

If you're married, you can protect your marriage from extramarital affairs by displaying at least six smooth round crystal balls with the same or different sizes, Allen said.

"The most important thing to understand is that feng shui is really about the energy that's surrounding you in your personal space," said Allen, feng shui practitioner for 12 years now. His consultants around the globe stimulate energy and if there are plenty of a harmonious flow of positive energy, good fortune and good luck."

From Rat to Rabbit

According to Allen, 2005 is a year when a person born in the Year of the Rat can make good gains in cash, status and position, with opportunities to make money as well. So it's important to place either a crystal ball on the north desk or in the vicinity of Kuan Kung to bring more wealth, plus good fortune. Also keep a Jade Qui Ren to ensure support from colleagues.

This is not the year for the Ox person to take risks, make feelings decisions or jump into new ventures without doing your homework. Avoid gambling and big investments. Wearing amulets such as the 9 Eyed Dzi will protect you to some extent. Be wary on stage of the country and trying a coin to ensure support from your peers. But as far as romance is concerned, the stars of the year are in your favor. This is a good year for the single Ox to tie the knot.

There is evidence in the chart of a Tiger person so it's important the horse be careful at all times. The Tiger has little money luck this year so he should work overtime for business and avoid liberal spending sprees. He should wear protective amulets like the sword Dragon to empower his work. He should place a set of Allen and Friends Big armor on the work table to keep unfavorable energy at bay, he said.

Rabbit people are in conflict with the Grand Duke Jupiter this year. Misfortune comes in the form of disputes and accidents. They should carry the Tai Sui coin at all times to make sure they keep out of harm's way. As there's a risk of health problems, they should wear the Medicine Buddha at all times.

From Dragon to Sheep

It's to an average year for Dragon people. Problems will stem mainly from backstabbers, lawsuits and frustrating negotiations. They'll suffer from stress, high blood pressure and physical exhaustion. This is a year for them to pursue relationships by keeping a Peach Blossom Animal, the Rooster, next to their bed. Or carry a Peach Ancient Ice carving of Wu Peng or a pyramid like red-colored crystal as a strategic base in the house.

For Snake people, their troubles will stem from dealings with people, minor devastations in relationships and legal dilemmas or minor brushes with the law. But Snakes have ample wealth and it is natural luck to their chart this year. They should display a triangular red crystal in the southeast corner of their home and office table to ensure peace and harmonious relationships. For wealth-creating energy, they should hang three pieces of Pentacle Wand in the south corner of the bedroom.

This promises to be a fulfilling year for those born in the Year of the Horse. Allen said, "You have windfall luck that comes in the form of lottery winnings or bonus income from deal-making, moonlighting and being at the right place at the right time." Horses should energize their lucky star by hanging 3 Period 8 Birds in the south. To enhance relationships, they should display Peach Blossom Animal, the Rabbit, next to their bed.

For Sheep people, the stars promise to bring money and wealth luck as well as new opportunities in work and business. They should display the White Tribute Horse carrying bags of crystal chips in the south corner of the living room. They should wear the 6 Eyed Dzi bracelet to keep bad luck away.

From Monkey to Boar

A Monkey person should wear the 16 Eyed Dzi bead, which activates the wealth star that brings opportunities, business deals and big breaks. He should display the Gold Colored Rooster carrying a coin in its beak in the west corner to boost his networking luck.

A Rooster person will have more than his fair share of material rewards. He will be subconsciously incensed at the intellectual level as well. He should carry the Seven Dragon Charm and Tai Sui Coin at all times.

There is promise of love for the dog-born person this year and members of the house will tend to go home than business and resort matters. Place Large Tortoise in the south corner of your house to enhance your career. Make sure you tap into the luck of your Allies and Friends for assistance and help.

February brings danger of money losses for the Boar, particularly in gambling or speculation, so he should avoid playing the stock market or the casino. See career luck, he should hang a painting of the 108 Birds in the bedroom or office. He cannot all bad luck into good fortune, he should carry 3 Color Dzi bead or all times.

E-mail the author at cheryn@inquirer.com.ph

HANDBALLS paintings absorb the hostile energy of the Arguementative Star 2, which flies into the southeast sector of the house this year.

2 CHI LINS overcome the possibility of illness hitting your home.

3 ELEMENT Pagoda should be placed in the northwest part of the home to cure the Deadly Five Yellow misfortune.

RUAN Kong, which should be placed in the living room, helps you realize your good fortune.

PI YAO helps overcome misfortune caused by Grand Duke Jupiter.

SMOOTH crystal balls of the same or different colors help prevent marriages.

MARITES Allen

Misfortune teller

By Pam Pastor

PLAZA Miranda was as busy as ever. Vendors were hawking colorful plastic bags and cheap toys and shoppers were rushing to distribute presents, dodging the fireworkers set off to scare children. Just a few steps away, lining one side of Quiapo church, was a row of fortunetellers. Some were old, some young, some were male, a lot were female, and those who weren't busy reading palms were calling out to passersby, offering a look into their future.

Madam Lita was younger than most of the Quiapo fortunetellers. She smiled as she whipped out her tarot cards.

"It's the Year of the Rooster, so need to work hard and your heroism the rules will continue," she said in the vernacular.

She said prices of commodities would continue to grow.

"There will be a lot of family problems, spouses showing betrayal or suspicion, judgment day is near, that's why suspensions are all around," she added.

Diesel

Madam Lita continued laying down the cards. "There might be a volcanic eruption and an earthquake, but not much severe."

The predictions reminded Diesel. "There will be chaos. I pity the President, a lot of people will go against her. Members of the NPA will come out, prisoners will also cause trouble."

Madam Lita repeatedly talked about a controversial tape but kept saying that prayers would help us get through it.

She kept stressing that people would rebel against President Arroyo. She also had negative predictions for Filipinos abroad.

"Many people abroad will be imprisoned," she continued, "and there will be Filipinos who will get hurt in disasters in other countries, in bombings and accidents. But people will evacuate and leave. A lot of them will still go abroad."

"There will be a shift in male-female roles in 2005, she said. "Women will become the breadwinners instead of men."

Generally couples will have a tough time next year, according to her. "Many unlikely couples will split up."

She said the stars were a lot of doubts in the coming year. Madam Lita continued stressing the importance of prayer in facing 2005.

She cut all the cards down, and leaned back, indicating that she was done. It was time to go back to the present. Because Madam Lita, the clairvoyant, was under the present tense so much brighter than tomorrow.

E-mail the author at pamm@pdi.com.ph

Disney princesses in ice spectacle

THE MOST exciting ice spectacle to hit Manila, "Disney On Ice presents Princess Classics," now at the Araneta Coliseum until Jan. 3.

Reproduced by Disney's seven princesses—Cinderella, Aurora, Ariel, Sleeping Beauty, Belle, Mulan and Snow White—in their ice debut in Cinderella's kingdom, the show features a cast of over 50 skaters performing more than seven dazzling routines.

"Disney On Ice Presents Princess Classics" is a tale of triumph against evil using the strength of heart, humor and hope, as told through the eyes of these seven princesses.

The Araneta Coliseum stage is transformed into a fairy-tale, three-story enchanting castle that changes dramatically as audiences travel around the world—from Cinderella's kingdom, to the city of Agrabah, where Aurora lives, to Mulan's China and Ariel's underwater kingdom.

An international troupe of more than 40 award-winning figure skaters take to the ice under the helm of world-renowned choreographer Tom Dickson, who was named Choreographer of the Year by the Professional Skaters Association and the United States Professional Figure Skating Association in 2002, and his wife Catarina Lindgren, a former Olympian.

For this 23rd production of "Disney On Ice," the couple incorporates the current international phenomenon of synchronized skating into the high-impact choreography of Disney's Princess Classics. Dickson and Lindgren made a team consisting of more than half of the cast in performing four-paced, highly detailed maneuvers in exact precision to create unique formations on the ice.

Adding to the dazzling display are the costumes by award-winning Broadway designer Gregg Barnes. Taking hundreds of yards of sheer fabric, sequins and glitter, Barnes makes each Disney princess shine from within.

"Disney On Ice Presents Princess Classics" will have performances until tomorrow.

Tickets are priced at P1,225 (VIP), P1,000 (patron and lower box), P700 (upper box A), P500 (upper box B) and P385 (general admission) and are now available at all SM Tickemart outlets and at the Araneta Box Office.

Call 911-8888 or 911-5041 local 8888.

SEA princess Ariel in "The Little Mermaid"

Sunday LIFESTYLE Home

Mara again, naturally

The human body is like a Rolls Royce. It should have the finest food, but we sort of batter it with the worst food because it's convenient

PHOTO BY MIKE LIMZON

PLAYTIME
By the Staff

AFTER 11 years of advocating for organic food and running an organic restaurant, called The Source, and an organic market, Mara Pardo de Tavera says it's a good sign that other organic markets have sprouted in the city.

Now she's evangelizing another level: a cafe that will serve organic tea and coffee and double as an organic wine bar. She's currently looking for investors.

Her commitment to the cause is relentless. While there are now vegetarian restaurants that offer nothing but veggies, she says one can't be assured the vegetables are organic. In her case, she won't spray vegetables with pesticides. "It's the one who makes people aware that if you have an owl in your vegetable you should be happy," she says. "If that owl lives, it's an indication you will also live. It's the absence of life that should worry you."

She recommends taking extra virgin coconut oil instead of the imported Canola oil which, she says, comes from crops and that was used for paint before, was genetically modified for human consumption and was marketed overzealously and sold hard for at least three generations.

Mara's concerns extend to the preservation of the environment—like eco-tourism—and tradition—like patriotism. She is among the founders of the local branch of the Slow Food Movement, an international conversation on the ever-growing fast food craze.

How do you define "organic"?

Organic is food or produce that is grown or produced without any use of synthetic chemicals. That's the basic definition. It's a tough call because our life can be so brainwashed and hard-nosed and fast-paced.

So, even if it's not free-range chicken, for example, if it's not injected with commercial feed...

It's still better than the commercial ones.

Are free-range chickens organic?

Yeah, because free-range just means it's running around there and eating insects and bugs, which is good. You know, God did not create chickens to eat boxes of cereal or pork or the meat of other chickens. They're only meant to eat insects and plants. They don't even go by the sea and catch fish, right?

So how about cows? Cows don't go around hitting a pig, right? They'll eat the grass and grains. They're really vegetarians. And pigs are not really carnivorous either, unless they're trained. But what's happening in the world now is, when you kill a cow, about 30 percent of the weight of that cow... the bones, and the hooves and the parts that are not edible or people do not want to eat—are pulverized and made into feeds.

That's really the root of Mad Cow Disease. They feed these things that they know already in England had brain disease. Of course, the contamination and a disease in one species would not cross over to another species. That was true before antibiotics. So they started feeding cows these commercial feeds of dead sheep stuff. It was mixed with high heat so they thought going to young germs, but pulverize or convert pulverized into. What is the connection among the three? Antibiotics.

Are there standards to let people know they are buying truly organic foods?

There are international standards for food and produce, even for fibers and for clothing. There's an organization in Europe called IFOAM, or the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. Once a year they have a huge international fair, around March or end of February. And if you go there, it's not just food. It's everything, from food and drinks, cheese and wine to textiles, fibers, cosmetics—everything.

So there's a whole range of products that are available?

There's a whole range, and that's what I'd like to bring into this market also. Including some imported ones—not frozen I'm referring to—but because if you have these imported products, only people will see it and say, "Oops, it's just oh, supposed for rich you." And it will sort of jumpstart the food industry, the textile industry or the furnishing industry to create products that are more natural and organic.

Are you involved in informing people about what to watch out for?

I'm setting up a website so I'll have like a question-and-answer thing, because a lot of times, people come to me and say, "What should I do, I have acne but I don't like to spray?" I have become like an information center, and I'm not able to do it for everybody as much as I'd like to. So I don't like wasting the website... and people being able to write to that website and ask their questions wherever they are—might be able to help them.

How do you react to people who say organic food is (1) expensive and (2) ambiance?

Well, the question you really depends on the cooking style. When I had my restaurant, my point was to prove to people that organic didn't mean tasteless. It's really how well they are cooked.

There's a restaurant in Washington called Nora, and there's another in San Francisco called Greens. Those two restaurants that I know of only serve organic foods—cereals, grains, legumes, the whole range of gourmet food. When I went to Nora's, it cost me about $75 with wine. That was expensive. And yet, the booking in that restaurant was two weeks in advance. So obviously, there's something going right for them.

Organic is expensive because we're only reaching out to, I feel, probably less than half of one percent of the market in Manila. If that increases to one percent, I could lower my prices. Also, right now, we don't get any funding assistance from anybody. All the farmers are self-sufficient. If you're a commercial farmer you could go to the Department of Agriculture or a seed bank and say, "I have one hectare. I want to plant corn." And they

more >>

Mara again, naturally

From page C1

give you seeds that you can pay for after you've harvested.

We don't have any of that. Also, cost-wise, it's a lot of labor because we have to go down, check the plants manually. Some we don't spray chemicals. And then, on top of that, because we don't put fertilizer in beforehand to create an abundance in the seed, if in a commercial farm one-hectare comes out with 1,000 kilos of something, ours will only be 500, 60, right away there's a difference in the price.

Does organic farming take longer?

It takes a little bit longer, like rice, for example. The mountain province rice would take 150 days, sometimes 180 days, whereas the hybrid rice only takes 120. So already you have a 30 to 40-day sometimes 60-day, difference. That's a big difference in terms of profitability.

You said your mother is only less than 50 percent of 3 percent. Why is this so even after 11 years?

JOY: You know, when I started 11 years ago, we had like four tables, we could use in two hours. And of course, that shouldn't be used.

But you have a lot more suppliers and a bigger market now.

Yeah, and I'm even thinking—another plan that I've been working on for about a year now—is a school day support school that will teach the kids the thing from farming to cooking the food, but basically with the farmers.

What's happening to Go Farmers is—and this is what her there are commercial or organic—40 percent of our people are farmers. So if farmers themselves produce all our food. But they just don't manage their farms and their businesses well because they've never had any training in business—how to deal with banks, how to do with marketing, etc. So they don't have the capital and the middle thing from farming to cooking the food, but basically with the farmers.

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How many farmers do you already have?

JOY: Well, if I stretch it all out, from the NGOs to all the group that I work with, quite 1,000.

How many organic farming-related NGOs are there?

JOY: There are many NGOs. I don't even work with all of them. There are many that are just there, but not functional. I actually learned one, but I took myself out of it because we had different views in principles. I'm destined as a pastor, I'm destined as an NGO. Well, yes, I am, because I feel if I'm going to say it's organic, it really has to be organic. If you can't be, 70-ish, I'm going to say another one-one time because my poor cow's gonna die."

For me, okay use antibiotic on your cow one time, but don't sell that cow because it's contaminated. Because we're all actually tainted. I have customers who have reactions to antibiotics and, you know, they say that if you don't use that animal for a month, two months, then people say because you've touched on the antibiotics, that's why we have antibiotics as a reminder in the key issues of economy and stay there.

When we catch a cold, we're taking antibiotics, when we drink milk, there's antibiotics, when we eat meat, there's antibiotics, when we eat fish, there's antibiotics, our meat, the pork and the chicken have been given antibiotics, so then I say in our farm antibiotics in them, and every time you're eating those things—dairy products, meats—you are overloading your system with antibiotics.

Given the choice between meeting immediate hunger and a probable threat 20 years down now, wouldn't you choose to feed the world first?

What's our population right now? 78 million.

Eighty-two.

Okay, we have 82 million people. But have you traveled the countryside? When you just drive around there, you don't feel that 82 million hovering around you, right? You don't feel that. But if you go to the cities, you're talking 10 times what does the rainforest? Well, one hectare—you a lot enough people work in the fields. We have 40 percent, but not all 40 percent want to work the fields. Farmer they want to come to Manila. In Visayas, they want to go to Cebu. In Davao, they want to go to Davao. You know, to the urban centers.

And why do they want to do that? Because they need better income, a better quality of life. So what we need to do is create employment with a better quality of life. That's why, for me, organic is one way they can get a better price and a better economy. The problem is they're not earning enough. That's why the same 40 percent that are farmers are the same 40 percent that you call the poorest of the poor.

About feeding the world. You know it's really in the distribution. Because we really have enough food to support our 80 million plus population. We do. It's just that we don't manage it well, how come big corporations, let's say Dole, how come they manage their resources so well? Because it's professionally managed, from direct financing to human resources to natural resources, to the bulk. That's the difference.

I have this problem even with my farmers. From December all the way to March, I'm going to have an oversupply of carrots. You know, if I can only make carrot cake, carrot jam, carrot anything, I'll make it because they're oversupplying us.

"I'll tell them, 'Okay, send me 300 kilos,' and they send me 500 because they're overplanted. It's not like, you know, in Hoff's American countries or in Europe where there is a board that oversees the commodity. This group is already planning on many carrots, so don't plant that much. And let's make it in little bits, little bits, little bits. So every month there'll be carrots of certain amounts consistently. The highest where you have a build of carrots, you know.

Our poor farmers get abused because they have a wholesale mentality of carrots and they probably need to sell those carrots about P10 per kilo to make money or make their expenses. The trader will come and say, "Ang dami niyan, o sige, dalhin ko sa'yo for P5." They have to sell it for that price and we share.

What's not enough is the distribution system. What's not enough is the farm-to-market roads, which is being eaten by Chinese imports.

We also have this infamous system where groceries, supermarkets, hotels don't pay you till 180 days. Whereas you or a restaurant, you pay with a credit card. Let's say you pay P1,000. The restaurant claims the money from the bank, whenever bank that card is. Then get the money only after 30 days. But they don't pay the farmers until after 180 days.

For Batasa, the critical supply is rice. The problem if you plant rice organically is it's slow-growing.

It's slow-growing, that's true. But, you know, in the Philippines we have a lot of rain. Like right now, hoho in Bulacan, right? But in the Mountain Province, running rains long and weather, and so, it gets landlogged because when the farmers come down from the mountains to get down to Manila, they can't anymore. I have a shipment of rice coming and my ship was delayed because of the rain. They got held back somewhere.

So it's back to scheduling. We should know how to schedule around disasters or weather situations.

When it's rainy season in Luzon, I can go to Mindanao and get produce from there. Mindanao, actually, has so much more land and other things to offer. It's just that—it's not so developed, and it's hard to be stable and consistent there. If they had better financing for their region, I think they will be able to supply enough food for the whole country.

When it's rainy season in Mindanao, we can go to the Mountain Province no- more. It's really a matter of distribution

'All the bugs had gone to the organic rice. Insects are intelligent. They know the better rice. They didn't go to the commercial rice. One's nutritious, the other one's smoy chemicals'

and scheduling.

What about prices? Don't we keep trying to produce as much rice as possible to keep the price of rice low?

We can, but you notice that it's a ratio of hybrid rice at rice from Thailand probably mga P30. P40 per kilo. But it's worse of already. The mentality rice that I bring down from the Ifugao area I sell for P50 per kilo. Big difference in price, right? But the rice from P30, that's not taking into account the cost of the destruction to the environment, the cost of the destruction to health. That's separate.

Also, my P50 rice, when you eat that, you're helping save the environment, you're helping the farmers have a better livelihood, you're also helping save your own health. For me, it's cheaper.

I give you my own example. I'm 50 years old. I don't take any medication. I haven't taken any antibiotics for 20 years. I haven't even taken an aspirin in 10 years since I started eating organically. I don't have any major health issues. I don't even go to the doctor.

I find I'm living proof that if you eat organic, it's more expensive upfront but then you don't have all the expenses of medications and running to as many doctors for sure, I'm, it's cheaper in the long run because I don't have those initial costs. Also, I don't spend money on this Saturday—my oldest is 20, my second is 18, my youngest is 12—have never had antibiotics.

Can they eat out with their friends? Can they eat fast-food? (Laughter)

Sure, they can do whatever they want. But when they do, they don't feel good. They'll get the friends first. But they choose when because they've already learned that Chinese oil makes them sick like this.

Now were you introduced to the organic methods to begin with?

It's easier to keep away 50 times to say it began with my grandmother, because we lived in this place in Quezon City that looked like probinsiya. We had a fish pond, she had a farm, she grew her own food.

My mother was a doctor, but she wasn't also so much into buying drugs. Every time we were sick, she would go along with our grandmother and we go to an herbalist. The most she would do was, she'd give us antibiotics for two days, three days and after that, it's doing nothing for your body.

Then I studied hotel and restaurant management in Ifugao, so that gave me more insight into food as a healing source for the body. And then I lived in New York where I operated for many years, mainly catered, you know, really look-a-ga restaurants.

I also read books. I have whole library of all these things that I've read and I go to the Manila Seedbank and it's hard to be stable and consistent there. If they had better financing for their region, I think they will be able to supply enough food for the whole country.

When it's rainy season in Mindanao, we can go to the Mountain Province no- more. It's really a matter of distribution

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Simply just get turned off, and they wouldn't even listen to what I had to say.

How you considered retired.

Yeah, well, I'm considered retired. I accept it. I just retired. (Laughter)

Tell us about your ongoing advocacy.

Oh, yeah, I just moved to a house which has a pool. I like swimming. I like to exercise that way but I don't like the chlorine, and when I got this house with a pool, I didn't realize until I talked with the pool guy that then you maintain acid, acids. Sosis chlorine? I was shocked to learn.

I said, oh God! Maybe that's why my eyes get burned. For two days my bagsik-bagsik ng buhi ko.

We just set up the supposedly pool recently, and we checked all the balance and that and that. I don't exactly know what it means, but the technician said it had 14,000 parts per million of oxygen, which he said was excellent. It should be mga 14,000 but mine was better na. Optimum. And you know my water, it's been calming a lot, naghuhyan pa rigid, my pool is crystal-clear because of a filtering process. It's a fairly new process. It's like in the oxygen here in L.A. and here's the—

Is it expensive?

Yeah, more expensive, because of the other thing. But again, for me, I want to use my pool as often as I can and I don't want to have problems. You know that your skin is your largest organ, so when you jump into that chlorinated water with acid pool, it's going straight to your other organs. And if you have to do pawis, the first organ it will be is your kidneys, because it's where liquids are processed. And from my research, I found out that a lot of customers have kidney problems because they're exposed to

Mountain rice doesn't keep well...

The best way to keep mountain rice is to put it in the refrigerator or freezer. It's the best eh. You know, there was an experiment where they put organic rice here and commercial rice here, and in the middle they put a bunch of weevils, yung bugs na dumadami. Alphabetic eh, all the bugs had gone to the organic rice. Insects are intelligent. They know the better rice. They didn't go to the commercial rice. One's nutritious, the other one ammo chemicals.

If you're making carrot cake, what kind of sugar would you use?

Brown sugar. Muscovado. Not that bleached brown sugar, but brown sugar that's through a blending process, and then they put molasses to make it brown. You know muscovado is coffee latina so much easier. The only thing is, if you put it in dessert, everything is brown. But it's just a mindset. Brown is beautiful. Aren't we brown?

We know pancake? It's another one sugar, or pan with mantequilla but just a little bit harder to handle. I put it in a jar with water and let it melt down. I didn't like it. And then it happened to syrup. So I just put that syrup and mix it with my pancakes. And you know that other sugar we've had? It's the moreno in tins, which Malaysia has. It's also a thriving business in Thailand. They call it palm sugar.

Some organic also apply to sunscreen?

Oh, yes. In the organic store that I went to open, I would like to have that. There's a company that produces sunscreen lotion, which has no chemicals, using fruits and in Singapore. I went with Anida for a while because I was involved with this certification group in the US. It was the group that certified Anida products, so we were working very closely with them and they were producing their products on two branch that I know of in Europe. They were quite successful.

What about organic soap?

Mayon na ako soap. Luckily, there are two people I know that produce it. One is this Pina Bateno. The lady behind it is Mary Ann Bateno. What they do? since explore cosmic soda, a necessary ingredient for soap making but one that can burn the skin, with simple wood ash. Same with lunchbox paper, because they also use cosmic soda, so you just have to change to rice wood ash.

Are they using organic materials for fabric now?

Yes. When people have control, one of the things they are told by wholesale dictators is to use only natural fibers. Synthetics fibers don't breathe. The problem we have in the fibers is there are so many chemicals in the dye. And it doesn't take just one washing to remove that.

The fabric that's at least now—it has been for the last seven years—a mode of manipawi. There's a new opinion of that now. One is used for fabric. But you know that the Constitution of the United States was printed on hemp paper? The sailing mast of the galleon ships were made of hemp. The first Levi's jeans were made of hemp fabric. So it took a major catch-up in the Old world, and it was also up that up in other areas was really banning on marijuana for paper. If we had stuck to marijuana as a source of paper, we would still have our forests.

What about diesel sale?

We know, we are on archipelago, which means we have a wealth of sea salt. We can make so much. Penang is a producer of one of the best sea salts in the world, and it's near water an archipelago. We would produce that kind of great sea salt, but they made a law that even sea salt should now be iodized. To be intelligent, you have to iodize your salt. God, that's not funny intelligent, that's stupid intelligent. Because we already have iodine in our body needs. Sea salt and blood have the same chemical structure.

If we take that little bit of sea salt every day, it could be great for our system. But when you take iodized salt, it's processed and sodium, and it's not natural, really made iodine. You need natural iodine. That's not good for you.

Sea salt is really excellent. It's one of those things that we produce naturally. We eat salt that I sell to the market [from] Bureau Farm. It's rock salt, but the free variety.

How has the slow food movement taken off here?

Well, I have to say as a group we are not active. I'd like it to move a little faster, but there are so few members right now that are really committed to this. Unfortunately, we're all in transition.

What we want to do is create slow food tours. That's one of our ambitions. Because I really have seen of a thing like that in place in Lipa, Batangas. But we'd like to do it in other provinces. It's like an educational thing, where you go on tour, and learn about traditional fare and how they're prepared. We'd like to back that up with recipes.

Is slow food necessarily organic?

Very much so.

How can people keep healthy without having to spend so much?

I wished everybody has to survive, and sometimes a couple—husband and wife—from in town—do, in my mind, what I'd like to do is to create this organic food to get so people who are local can buy their food there. I'd also like to create a pool of cooks that can be hired to prepare food in people's homes. I also want to teach them how to do it.

We also have restaurants that we will tap to work with us. "What dishes would you like to get from your restaurant and make slow food, and how would this be done locally?" Then we'll sit down with them and say, our ethic, rice but traditional rice, not regular refined salt but sea salt, not white sugar but brown sugar. You know, all these little quirks that make the food more of a slow food movement. It's not just slow cooking.

Time for Plan B

LOOK does one reverse a planet under stress and a civilization in trouble? That may seem like an impossible task but there are ways to do it.

One possibility is Plan B, proposed by Lester R. Brown. He is the author of "Plan B...Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble."

Formed in the Asia-Pacific Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production suggested, we read it to understand better why business economics and the ecology must now have a common goal.

Plan B says Brown, is the shift from Plan A, which basically means "business as usual." Say years now, he says, governments and those experts found Plan A the surest solution to major problems. After scientists has passed or a problem is revealed universal, it becomes "business as usual."

But that can no longer be so given the current state of world ecology. Hence, Plan B. It is, you might say, a contingency or fall-back plan, and it is two important to dismiss as "impossible" to achieve.

Bubble economy

As humans meander through the third millennium, Plan A is becoming less and less feasible. It was easy enough, say 50 years ago, just WWII, to go back to the way things were.

But that's no longer the case. The economy has become a bubble that may burst soon. This bubble economy is the result of people's desire to satisfy their excessive demands by consuming the earth's natural assets.

Brown says it is a bubble economy because "we are taking resources from the earth that it can grow on an ongoing basis... We are cutting trees faster than they can regenerate, overgrazing rangelands and converting them into deserts, over-pumping aquifers and draining them dry... We are taking fish from the ocean faster than they can reproduce."

As the examples, these acts seem to solve problems at hand, to meet the big demands for those products. But it is becoming increasingly apparent that the so-called solutions are themselves the problems.

If resources seem to be booming, it's only because responsible people are turning a blind eye—and deaf ear—to what is really happening. Brown, spokesperson of the concept of "sustainable development," points out that the world is fast losing its natural resources.

Saying the same things

Our own environmentalists have been saying the same things over and over. The only difference is that they haven't mentioned any Plan B.

Brown has data to prove his points, and what data of horror can someone horror's then tell! The founder and president of The Earth Policy Institute, a nonprofit, interdisciplinary research organization based in Washington, D.C., is most persuasive in the terms of food and water shortages, with inevitably affecting the other. Two important challenges that farmers are facing now, says Brown, are rising temperatures and falling water tables.

"As temperatures are being felt as never before as evidenced by the rapid sea levels are rising up and the way deserts are expanding (desertification), falling water tables lead to the use of high-powered water pumps, making ever pumping dangerously unsustainable.

The effects on agriculture, says Brown, are best exemplified by the case of China. The country's vast land area, once considered one of its major assets, is rapidly deteriorating. Given China's big population, you immediately see why feeding millions of people becomes a major problem not only in the country but elsewhere.

Brown warns that if China extends the carrying capacity of its ecosystem, it is likely to "affect all of us." Already—to the world grains market. This will have a major impact on the rest of the world, which is also relying on that market for survival. This is spurring the latest wave of land acquisitions by countries with huge populations but limited land resources.

Doris Gaabriel Nayda

SEEING GREEN

Brown's explanations will, for sure, be better grasped by professionals and students of economics, agriculture and ecology, those directly affected but now must try to influence the minds and actions of our national leaders and the rest of us.

Prickly sub-issues

A question that arises is how Brown's recommendations in Plan B will play with some sectors of our country like the Church in the matters of overpopulation, and environmentalists in the issue of crop production. The first sector will naturally object to family planning methods that do not conform with its teachings, while the second group is likely to object to agricultural technologies that would speed up crop production through the controversial genetic intervention.

Brown, of course, does not touch on these sub-issues. If we do so here, it's mainly because they pluck sensitive chords in many hearts in our country.

Brown has much that we should heed but to "What will it take to revitalize our national economy of the gravity of the situation? Another avalanche of logs? Another big flood? Scarcity of seafood or agricultural produce? We pray not.

It is often said that a country is rich in industries but it is hoped we will not have the same fatal problems as other countries do, or least not as severely as for many changing temperatures, solutions to some of the immediate causes of the phenomenon—like ozone depletion and toxic emissions due to the burning of fossil fuels—must be undertaken even more intensely.

There is, of course, another resource for many Filipinos that goes well with the spirit of the season—to seek the spiritual grace to see our God-given availability to see us through. It's needed for us to enlist massive fortune. It would again. Let's hope for that this coming year.

E-mail the author at doristayda@yahoo.com

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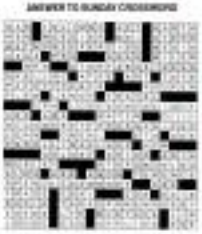
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